Oil and Ice
PAGE 6

Googling our laundry
PAGE 6

Book Reviews
PAGE 10

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Why military life is like Who-ville
PAGE 20

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CHRISTIAN COURIER

Cash from a hot tin roof

Jordan Hoogendam

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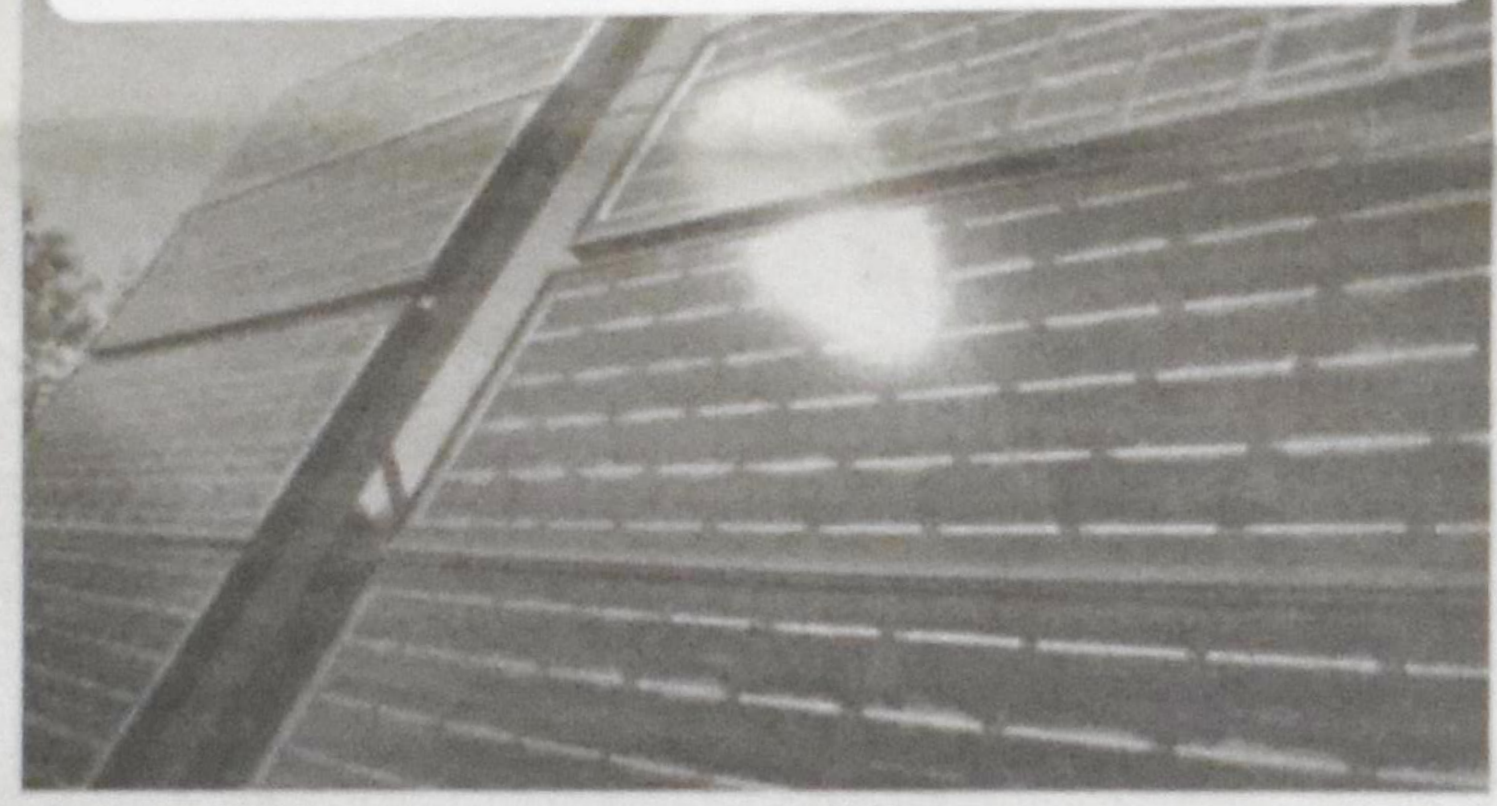
Are you involved with non-profits, schools, churches or hospital boards? If so, do you know what your roof is worth? In the rapidly developing green economy in Ontario (and around the world), the playing field has changed. The eyes of the world turned to Ontario on May 14, 2009, when the Green Energy Act was passed into law. In a matter of weeks the collective attention of solar developers, equipment manufacturers and installers from around the world was drawn to this province.

The Green Energy Act may position Ontario as a global leader in the fields of energy conservation as well as renewable and clean energy generation. These initiatives will create tens of thousands of new jobs. On September 24, 2009, Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George Smitherman, issued a Ministerial Directive to the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) to establish a Feed-In-Tariff (FIT) Program. This program was modeled after similar programs in Europe (particularly Germany), which were set up to pay home-owners and organizations for the clean, renewable electricity they generated. FIT revolutionized the German economy and created one of the world's largest renewable energy marketplaces. In the six weeks since the FIT program was announced in Canada, the renewable resource industry has changed. And it's crucial that the implications of the Green Energy Act are clear, because you may soon find yourself in charge of a decision regarding the Feed-in-Tariff program.



20-year-old solar photovoltaic modules generating electricity in Cameron, Ont.

Potential income

The new law is particularly relevant for building owners. Let's focus on solar electric (photovoltaic) technology in particular. The FIT program is structured to reward system owners for the development of solar-photovoltaic projects, especially rooftop installations (see sidebar for a breakdown of how this works). Commercial developers have been approaching schools, churches and other NGOs with offers to lease their roofs for the installation of solar-photovoltaic systems. This

See **Hot tin roof** *on page 2*

How the FIT program works:

The following chart shows the breakdown for incentives in terms of system size:

Solar-PV Size	System Size	Contract Price
Any Type	10 kW	80.2 cents/kWh
Rooftop	10 to 250 kW	71.3 cents/kWh
Rooftop	250 to 500 kW	63.5 cents/kWh
Rooftop	500 kW and higher	53.9 cents/kWh
Ground Mounted	10 kW to 10 MW	44.3 cents/kWh

This price structure was created to achieve a nominal 10-year payback (for example, economies of scale allow for a lower price on larger systems). The actual production will vary, depending on the angle and location of the solar-modules, and degree of shading and so on. The OPA has agreed to sign 20-year contracts that guarantee these prices. The motivation for this premium is to encourage home-owners to install solar photovoltaic systems to generate electricity during times when consumer demand is at its highest: during hot summer days when air-conditioning loads peak. When the peak demand is reduced, and relieves the existing generation plants, the Ontario government will be able to defer the construction of new power plants. It is a model that we have seen successfully applied in Europe, and the Ontario Government is now leading here in Canada.

The Great Firewall of China

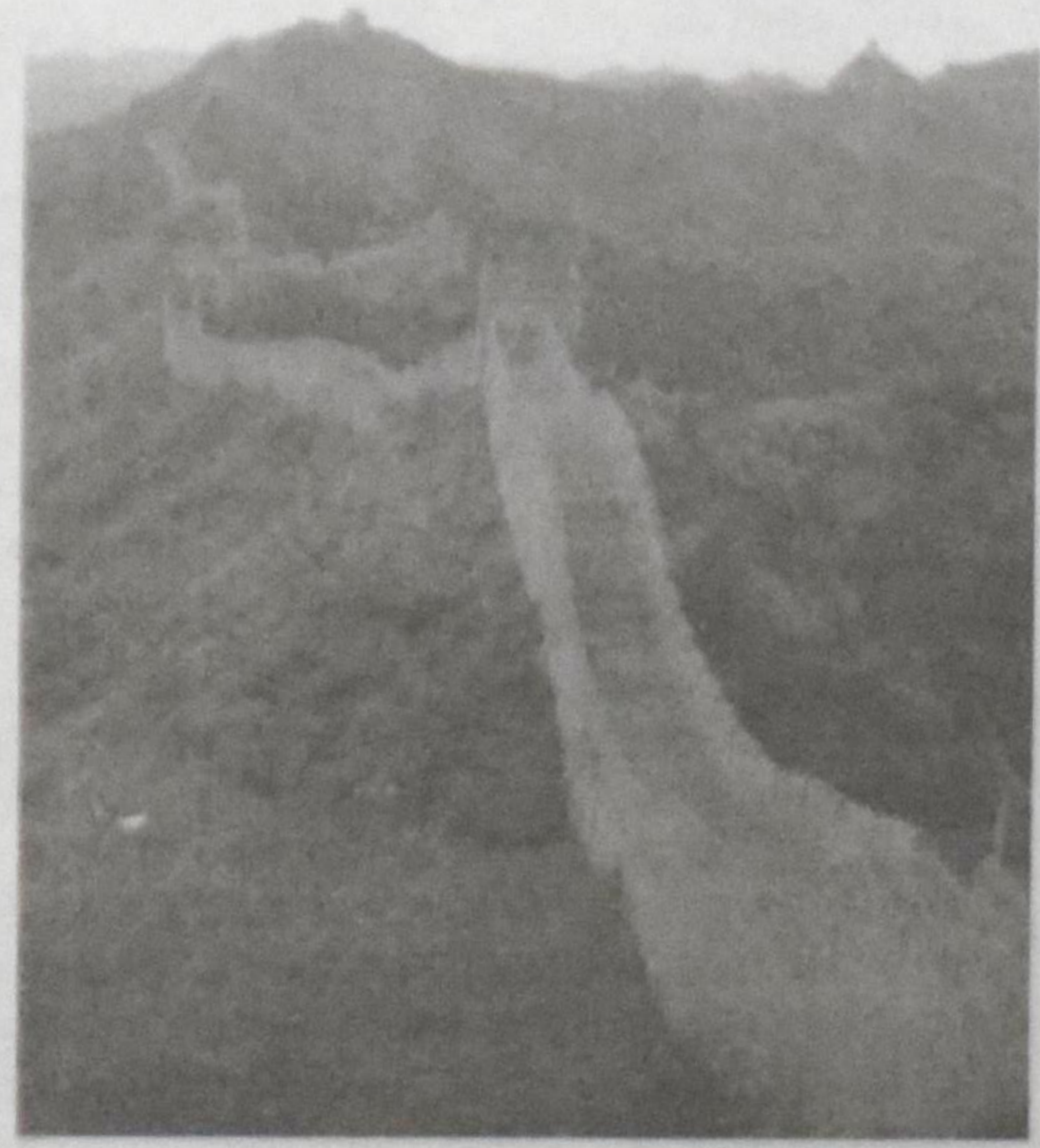
Harold Alkema

The original Chinese wall, begun in the fifth century BC to protect against attack, now has an online doppelganger dubbed the Great Firewall of China. Instead of keeping foreign invaders out, however, this wall is designed to keep certain information out, and to maintain the power and prestige of the Chinese government.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has one the world's most advanced and pervasive internet censorship systems, which blocks content by preventing certain IP addresses from being routed through. There are standard firewalls and proxy servers at all internet gateways. The system also uses selective DNS poisoning when specific sites are requested. As a result, certain types of content simply cannot be found on the internet within the borders of China. For instance, a query seeking out information on Taiwan, Tibetan independence, human rights or other sensitive political issues will yield few or no results.

Chinese internet censorship

See page 2



News

Cash from a hot tin roof continued from page 1

transformation has opened up a whole range of new opportunities. At first glance, these offers sound good: the school, church, or NGO could acquire a new revenue stream without any fundraising or capital outlay. But roof area in Ontario has just substantially increased in value, and it is important that organizations understand what their rooftops are worth.

Herein lies an opportunity and some potential pitfalls – particularly for owner-occupied buildings such as churches, schools, and other non-profit organizations. A new market is emerging; now, solar developers are bidding on roof area. These prices are typically framed as dollars per square foot of roof area, or as dollars per kilowatt of solar panels ($/kW – where kilowatt is a measurement of peak power for solar-PV systems).

Lease vs build

The current lease rates work out anywhere from $30 - $40 per kW of solar installed. If a building owner were to lease space for a 50kW system, the organization would receive annual revenue of approximately $2,000 per year. On a pitched roof facing south this would represent approximately 3,500 – 4,000 sq. ft. of panels or more, depending on the technology used.

If, however, the building owners were to develop their own assets, a 50 kW system could provide an average annual revenue of $35,000 (this will vary depending on the technology, scale, and location of the system). The typical cost for a system of this size is in the $8,000 - $10,000 per kW; or $400,000 - $500,000, which translates into a simple payback of 11 to 14 years – well within the contract timeline of 20 years. In round numbers, even if we assumed 50 percent of the revenue is required to service the debt and to cover maintenance costs, that leaves a remaining $17,500 per year on average for the organization, as opposed to the $2,000 nominal lease rate. The specific arrangement will depend on the amount of debt incurred in developing the system, interest rates, and payback terms. However, the bottom line is the enormous opportunity for organizations that are interested in developing their own systems.

To this end, I hope this article is a call to action – to raise this issue in the minds of administrators, boards and frontline personnel. We are called to be stewards of God's creation by exploring renewable energy options, including solar energy. It appears now that the principalities of this world will reward us for doing so! We have been withdrawing from creation's energy bank for too long. Now we have an opportunity to take advantage of the abundant solar income, whether through partnerships with third-party developers or owner-financed developments.

Before signing a lease, decide . . .

How will the installation impact the roof's warranty?

Will the company leasing roof space readily accommodate roof maintenance?

Does the building owner have ultimate say regarding how the system will look?

What access is required for the developer's personnel for maintenance, and what clearances may this require?

Who will carry the insurance for the system?

What will happen to the system at the end of the contract?

Live in the States?

Some jurisdictions in the USA are in the process of developing similar programs. For more details, see *www.dsireusa.org*.

Jordan Hoogendam (jordan.hoogendam@thirdwaysolar.com) is a Professional Engineer in Ontario. He is presently involved in the formation of Third Way Solar Inc., an organization committed to helping not-for-profit organizations realize their potential for fiscal, social, and environmental stewardship through the development of solar energy systems.

The Great Firewall continued from p.1

also relies on human intelligence to curb the spread of anti-government content. Citizens are encouraged to report websites and chat rooms that host information unflattering to government. Moreover, the PRC will sometimes step up its internet censorship efforts ahead of events that could shame or inconvenience the communist party, such as the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre last June.

Dissent within China

In spite of the extensive security features on the Chinese internet, the web remains the best outlet for anyone in China wishing to get reliable information or to speak truthfully about the state of its government. The internet brought the first news of the AIDS epidemic in Henan province, the poor safety record in Chinese mines, and news of the 2005 poisoning of the Songhua River, which caused a water shortage in the city of Harbin. No other medium has done so much to expose government corruption and mismanagement within the PRC.

Nonetheless, the internet's full potential for developing democracy in China has not been realized. Much more could be done to spread accurate information and honest commentary on China's often shabby human rights record. Compared to the U.S. and other industrialized countries, however, online usage has barely penetrated the Chinese market, with most usage centered in cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guandong. Most Chinese currently use the internet solely for entertainment.

US corporations back PRC

While many in the United States have criticized China's internet restrictions, it is also true that two US hi-tech firms provide the means by which PRC authorities monitor web content. In 2004, Cisco Systems and Juniper Networks assisted the Chinese government with a systems upgrade known as "CN2," which significantly increased its ability to monitor web content. Beginning in 2008, Cisco also sold China routers designed to prevent attacks by viruses and worms, but which were also useful for filtering out sensitive content. Cisco has denied charges that it helped Chinese officials police the internet, but the equipment it provided has assisted the regime.

Sadly, this is not an isolated case. The US internet company Yahoo gave the Chinese regime enough information to convict a journalist who was too open about Tiananmen Square. In spite of the incident, Yahoo claims that it is committed to "open access to information and communications on a global basis." Google also drew criticism for agreeing to censor some content on the Chinese version of its website. And even though Microsoft chairman Bill Gates brags that "the ability to really withhold information no longer exists," his company shut down the site of a Chinese blogger who commented on political issues, underscoring the fact that even Microsoft's ideals falter under certain regimes.

Woman protests censorship before a "Great Firewall of China" sign in Sydney.

Freedom fighters from the West

On the other hand, some American computer and online companies have refused to do business with China from an ethical standpoint. Thirty-five US companies have signed a statement, drafted by Reporters without Borders in 2005, calling on internet businesses to adopt codes upholding freedom of expression. "The Internet, like anything else, is just a tool, and it can be used for good purposes like liberation and democratization and it can also be used as a tool of repression."

The American Congress has also tried to pass laws to force companies to allow wider freedom of information on the internet in China. A congressman recently introduced a bill that would forbid US Internet companies from placing their servers in Chinese territory. This move would effectively put internet content out of Chinese jurisdiction. The industry, however, is not enthusiastic about this measure, because it would greatly slow the speed of access for users located in the PRC.

Nonetheless, several small steps have been taken in recent years towards opening the whole internet to China. In 2007, the Global Online Freedom Act was passed, making it illegal for US companies to give out users' personal information to governments that restrict internet access. Under the 2008 budget, 18 million was allotted by the State Department to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, for developing anti-censorship tools and services that could help users breach electronic firewalls set up by the Chinese authorities. And in June of 2009, Freedom House – a human rights organization – condemned China's harsh limits on information sharing.

As internet services become more widely available to Chinese citizens, it is critical that they are able to use the medium to promote honest dialogue and to address their country's woeful human rights record. If they cannot, the internet will become another area dominated by the communist regime and never a means to liberalization. Meanwhile, governments and companies in the west have to decide if they will assist the People's Republic of China or the average internet users of China. Thus far, many within the US have shown a degree of hypocrisy in this regard; they claim to support wider freedom of information, while giving the Chinese government the tools and information it needs to track down and prosecute dissenters. In the 1200s, Ghengis Khan bribed some guards and made it easily over the Great Wall of China. Perhaps the Great Firewall will be scaled some day as well.

Harold Alkema works as a researcher with a private firm in Ottawa specializing mainly in Native Affairs and historical research.

News

A private space industry is born

Richard Branson: a new breed of space entrepreneur.

Peter N. Spotts (CSM)

Growing up on the Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea, Chris Stott was a space buff from the start. "There isn't a time I can remember when I wasn't fascinated by space," he says.

Little wonder then that he waxes enthusiastic about humanity's potential as a spacefaring species, especially when the full power of private investment finally emerges. Mr. Stott is chairman of ManSat, a space-commerce consulting group on the island off Britain and Ireland. But his ties to human space exploration also are personal. His wife is NASA astronaut Nichole Stott, currently the flight engineer on the International Space Station.

He acknowledges that governments play a key role in space as the tip of the spear, handling cutting-edge exploration. But in the end, he says, the full potential for space travel will only be realized when the clout of the markets is harnessed. "You've got this massive, 800-pound gorilla in the room twinkling its little fingers and saying, 'Hello.'"

Companies replace government

The gorilla already has a toe in the door. It began with privately funded tourist trips to Russia's old space station, Mir, as well as to the ISS. When aircraft designer Burt Rutan captured the X Prize in 2004 for the first privately funded trip to the doorstep of space, his achievement triggered interest – and money – for new craft capable of supporting the effort by Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic company to build a hotel and launch complex for suborbital trips in southern New Mexico.

Entrepreneurs such as former Internet gurus Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos are investing their substantial personal fortunes in building a new generation of rockets to shrink launch costs. Both want to put humans into space. "The original X Prize was all about making the technical case" for human spaceflight outside the government domain, Stott says. The current Lunar X Prize, designed to stimulate private investment in going to the moon, "is all about making the business case."

He likens human spaceflight today to the early days of communications satellites. Initially, they were built under the aegis of multigovernment groups like Intellsat. But once commerce became involved, the satellite industry took off, mushrooming into a $260 billion business. The Earth's "like a giant apple," Stott says. "Every day 6-1/2 billion people take a bite out of it" and pollute what's left. In trying to meet the challenges of living sustainably, "people are looking in front of themselves. They forget to look up."

Fall of the wall: 20 years later

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

Exactly two decades ago today, the Berlin Wall was opened, marking much more than a symbolic end to communist rule in the old Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. That autumn I was beginning my third year teaching political science at Redeemer University College. For months I had been listening to shortwave radio programmes from the various international broadcasters, including the BBC, Deutsche Welle and Radio Moscow, fascinated by the unprecedented developments in that part of the world.

Earlier that year, Mikhail Gorbachev began to implement democratic reforms in the Soviet Union itself – reforms intended to save communism in that country, but which resulted in its death, along with the Union itself. In 1988 Foreign Minister spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov had announced the "Sinatra Doctrine," an allusion to the American popular singer's song, *My Way*, thereby indicating the end of Soviet interference in the affairs of its East European client states.

Shortly thereafter, former US national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski published *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, in which he predicted the end of communism by the centenary of the Russian Revolution in 2017, in short more than a generation later. When I read the book in the summer of '89, Brzezinski's forecast seemed wildly optimistic. Surely the process would be more gradual than that.

Like dominoes

Of course, by August, events were beginning to race out of control. That month Poland formed its first semi-democratic government in more than 60 years, with the long-ruling communists clearly on their way out. East German citizens were leaving that country in droves, a consequence of Hungary having dismantled the barbed wire fence along its border with Austria. On the 9th day of November, the Berlin Wall was opened, apparently due to a miscommunication in the lower ranks of the government. But once it was breached, there was no turning back. Within a year the two Germanys would be reunited.

Later in the month, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia unseated the communists, who had ruled uncontested there from 1948. By Christmas the communist government in Romania was gone. The entire region had entered a new era with startling swiftness.

Twenty years later, most of the former communist countries are members of NATO, with Albania and Croatia joining only in April of this year. Ten are members of the European Union. The Russian Federation is now ruled by a former KGB agent, who, while not a communist, is definitely versed in the methods of his former employer. The Cold War is long gone, but tensions in the region continue, often over indeterminate international boundaries that were never conclusively settled after the Soviet Union's breakup.

Predetermined events

As we lived through the momentous events of 20 years ago, I could not help thinking of Daniel's visions recorded in the final chapters of the book bearing his name. These chapters predicted the events of the next five centuries, culminating in the arrival of God's kingdom, which we recognize in the person of Jesus Christ. I was especially struck by the references to angelic "princes" of the various nations of the ancient near east.

With the fall of the wall and the speedy collapse of virtually every régime in the former Soviet bloc, one had the impression of a dark spiritual force being withdrawn from the region. I was reminded of the refrain recited more than once by the ancient prophet: "The Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will" (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32).

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is now blogging at: http://firstthings.com/blogs/evangel/.

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Editorials

The decline of Canadian English

Brett Alan Dewing

It is widely circulated that Canadians have no national identity. In fact, it has become simultaneously a cliché and (strangely enough) a national identity. There is something in the Canadian that takes pride in saying, "I am nothing in particular!" The closest we can come to identity is a beer ad.

The kicker is that we don't hold on to what identity we do have. As someone who makes his living by reading the writing of Canadians, I am constantly shocked at how loose-handed we can be with our own language. Canadian English is a distinct dialect, separate from American or British English. It is one of the few things we can claim as our own. And yet, the majority of Canadian writing I receive uses American spelling.

YXRU?

True, Canadian spelling is not that far removed from U.S. spelling. Similarly, some may say that we as Canadians are not that different from our neighbours in North America. But it is a crucial difference that needs to be safeguarded.

The most common difference of Canadian English is the British u. So we don't have a catchy rhyme to remember it ("U after O wherever R's go…?"), but it's not a difficult task. Think of it as "our" way to end words with "our": neighbour, armour, honour, saviour….

But there are other differences, too. We write "enrol" instead of "enroll," "instil" instead of "instill." We prefer "towards" to "toward." We distinguish between "practice" and "practise."

So why are Canadians so quick to discard the thing that sets them apart? Partially, it can be blamed on the common scapegoats of spell-check and the Internet. In typing this document, my computer keeps trying to "correct" my spellings – without even a polite inquiry! How very un-Canadian. After all, even our buses preface "Not In Service" with the national word, "Sorry."

Another problem is that the bulk of what we read, watch, and hear is actually American in origin. The less we see our spellings used, the less likely we are to use them. Do we need to take a lesson from Quebec? Or better yet: Iceland! Iceland's "language police" have managed to keep today's Icelandic virtually identical to ancient Icelandic by legislating its usage and commissioning works incorporating lesser-known words. Of course, Iceland is an island. Who knows how they would have fared if they shared a 3169-km border with a loud, proud superpower.

IC, IB

But what's the big problem, you may ask. A few dropped u's, a more universally recognized vocabulary? Hardly the end of our culture!

On the contrary, language is bedrock to a nation's culture and identity. The shape and nature of a people's language shapes not only their society but their very thought patterns. It may seem ludicrous, but certain thoughts are not possible outside of their native language!

Let's take a quick look at how English differs from a language such as Mandarin. We build words and ideas from left to right by adding letters. We can sound out the word as we place one letter ahead of another. The i after the o changes the vowel sound. The prefix or suffix completes the word. So, in our rhetoric we build ideas (or "arguments") by systematic aggregation (adding one thing on at a time).

Mandarin, conversely, is a language of connectivity. Each character carries a number of different ideas. By placing two characters side by side, those ideas comment on each other, forming a common meaning. Change the pairing, and you change the word or meaning. Similarly, Chinese thought is about drawing connections and setting up tensions. The Western idea of "building an argument" is quite literally foreign to them.

The ways in which we use language determine the ways in which we form ideas. What we say changes how we think. What we read shapes how we see.

IM. RU?

But beneath the philosophy of language, there lies a deeper issue. Do we take no pride in maintaining that which is ours? Will we allow our landmarks to be torn down in favour of Americanized "progress"? (Winnipeg film-maker Guy Maddin sees this as exactly what we are doing architecturally, and he is not alone.)

After all, we are the country of immigrants. Every Canadian is something else as well. We don't let the American melting pot alloy our heritages into a thick monolith. We hold the maple leaf in one hand and the edelweiss in the other (or the tulip, the lotus). We will not give up our "mosaic" dual identity so easily. Let us be as vigilant with our Canadian-ness.

I for one, jealously guard the title of Canadian. To me, it is a hard-won and distinct identity that is not merely defined by what it is not. I lavishly embrace the "eh" and doggedly scold my spell-check for sneakily changing my "enrol" to enroll." I hold the extraneous u high and declare, "I am Canadian!" Won't you be my neighbour?

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Canada

Understanding life backwards

Angela Reitsma Bick

When I was growing up, my family spent a few years sharing a house with my mother's parents. We had our own apartment, but it was a rare evening that I didn't race downstairs (Opa: "You sound like a herd of elephants") to visit. My Oma loves puzzles, so we'd shout out answers to Wheel of Fortune and work on the search-a-word and Jumble in the newspaper. I remember an Anne of Green Gables jigsaw puzzle that took over half of the kitchen table.

She's a traveller, this Oma. Besides hopping back and forth across Canada to visit her children for the past thirty years, she made frequent trips with her husband to visit siblings in California and the Netherlands. Furthermore, she's flown to Australia, Morocco, New Zealand and Taiwan alone. So here's a puzzle for you: how is it that there are times when this independent woman may not be able to find her way home?

Well, some neurotransmitters aren't working as they should, that's why. Everyone forgets stuff, of course. It's a part of life. We sort and shift through information all the time, discarding some details, collecting others. When we recall certain details, we literally re-member, put back together. And even though the reassembly may not be perfect, it's an important process. Without it, we can't figure out how to get back home after going to the store.

> *Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.*
>
> Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

The art of paying attention

In 1919, King George V of England decided to set aside one day for collectively remembering members of the armed forces who died in the Great War. November 11 was chosen to mark the day Germany signed the Armistice, one year previous. Ninety years later, the definition of Remembrance Day has been stretched ever-wider, now including commemoration for "all who have served and lost lives in defence of the country." In 2009, two minutes of silence is just about all the time we can spare for a shared reminder of the grim-ness of war.

I met a man in a nursing home recently, and casually asked if he had any grandchildren. No, he didn't. He didn't have children, either, and his wife had died. It was hard to know what to say next. His neurotransmitters seemed to be working perfectly, but his memories had no recipient. Why should this man be so alone, while others – like my Oma – are surrounded by family? Another puzzle.

If family members have a role in memory-keeping, then so do citizens. We need to mark this stretched-out, watered-down day with something more meaningful than a pinned-on plastic poppy. In the new heaven and earth, Isaiah says, "All the earlier troubles, chaos and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten" (65:17, *the Message*). Won't that be wonderful? But on this earth, certain types of trouble shouldn't be forgotten, not yet. Otherwise it's far too likely that we may not recognize the paths that lead to more trouble, or how to get home.

News

What do you think?

This month we ask our readers to elaborate on one or all of the following questions regarding feminism (for the purpose of this question, we define feminism as a movement that has tried to establish more rights for women, whether politically, culturally or economically: "Do you think feminism has been a beneficial or a destructive movement in Western societies? Have we in North America entered a post-feminist era?"

Please send your letters of response to Bert Witvoet via bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca.

Serious omission in 'Simplicity' issue

How could you omit the bicycle in an issue on simple living? What better answer to the "cult of the car"? I suppose biking is not a particularly practical mode of transportation for folks in Smithers or for large families elsewhere, but it deserves better from *Christian Courier*.

Except in the winter, I often go two weeks without taking my car out of the garage. My 60-year-old Schwinn bicycle takes me grocery shopping, to church meetings, and to nursing homes and the homes of friends. It runs almost solely on potatoes and peanut butter sandwiches – and a drop of three-in-one oil on occasion.

I have never understood why the Dutch immigrants to Canada – who wanted to bring their cigars, their pillared society, and their boerenkool to Canada – allowed their best biking traditions to disappear in the new land.

Well-cared for vehicle

Some time around 1949, when I was in eighth grade in New Jersey, my unmarried Aunt Nelle took me on a special shopping trip to Paterson, announcing on the bus that she intended to buy me a bike. She asked whether I had a preference, and I insisted it must not have balloon tires. The poor woman had seen an ad for a 24-dollar bike and found herself paying $45.

But no one took better care of his bike than I did, using it later for the two- or three-mile ride to High School (mostly up hill), and then even the four- or five-mile ride to her Christian Reformed Church in Midland Park, after I left the Presbyterian Church in which I had been reared and became CRC. Somehow the bike stayed home while I attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids.

Biking by grace

I later learned to ride the lordly Dutch bike of the Netherlands on regular trips through Amsterdam to attend Free University lectures and to get to my warm noon meal. I was proud to be able to cross town in 20 minutes or less. Later I lived in Bussum and occasionally biked the 20 kilometres to the city. The best part of a trip to Europe is being able to rent a bike at any train station and tour an area of Holland's church-dotted flat countryside.

The last few years in Strathroy I have returned to my Schwinn, which rides better than those complicated affairs with gears and hand brakes. Graciously the Lord has spared me any serious accidents in spite of cars cutting me off at corners and folks in parked cars opening their door in front of me. I am a proud member of the cult of the bicycle. May the Lord give me a few more years with my feet on the pedals, comfortably seated on the saddle, with all the beauty of nature around me.

John M.V. Koole
Strathroy, Ontario

What you do matters

I was pleased to see an article about Madonna House and founder Catherine Doherty in the October 26 issue of *Christian Courier*.

The writer of the article obviously has not been to Combermere. She has Combermere in Northern Ontario. Combermere is southwest of Ottawa. It's a tiny village in the Madawaska Valley. It's probably 200 km south of North Bay, as the crow flies.

Catherine (Kolyschkine) de Hueck Doherty had a fascinating life. Catherine was a social activist and founder of the Madonna House Apostolate. A pioneer of social justice and a renowned national speaker, Catherine was also a prolific writer of hundreds of articles, best-selling author of dozens of books, and a dedicated wife and mother. Her canonization is under consideration by the Catholic Church.

Catherine was born Ekaterina Fyodorovna Kolyschkine in Russia in 1896 to parents of deep Christian faith (Russian Orthodox). At age 15 she married Boris de Hueck. At the outbreak of World War I, Catherine became a Red Cross nurse at the front, experiencing the horrors of battle firsthand. On her return to St. Petersburg, she and Boris barely escaped the turmoil of the Russian Revolution with their lives, nearly starving to death as refugees in Finland.

Together they made their way to England in 1919 and immigrated to Canada in 1921. Catherine took various jobs and eventually became a lecturer, travelling a circuit that took her across North America. In 1943 she married Eddie Doherty, one of America's foremost reporters, who had fallen in love with her while writing a story about her apostolate. Eddie and Catherine moved to Combermere, Ontario, in 1947, naming the apostolate Madonna House. This was to be the seedbed of an apostolate that, in the year 2000, numbered more than 200 staff workers and over 125 associate priests, deacons, and bishops with 22 missionary field-houses throughout the world.

Eddie died in 1975. Catherine died in 1985 in Combermere at the age of 89.

Meindert van der Galien
Renfrew, Ontario

Moments in Chaplaincy Ministry

Read Psalm 121 *following the story*

He had volunteered to go with the platoon on patrol. Starting out early in the morning, they hoped to be back before sunset. The platoon commander had received no specific instructions. It was to be a sort of "show the flag" tour in relatively safe territory. They set out in the usual formation: three groups of ten men, three Bren guns and one mortar. Two scouts walked in front of the platoon. The chaplain walked with the second group. Just before noon, with the sun pouring down its heat, they ran into an ambush. Before they had a chance to dig in, four men were wounded, among them the chaplain. On the radio they called for support and before dark armoured trucks appeared. The enemy vanished. They returned to camp and the medics took care of the wounded.

The chaplain was transported to the field hospital, where doctors removed the shrapnel from his legs. There were about eighty men in the hospital. Some could not be moved because of the seriousness of their condition. Others were awaiting transfer to the main hospital. "Is there a worship service on Sunday?" the chaplain asked. "No sir," answered one of the doctors, "this hospital does not have a chaplain." "Well, I am a chaplain," said the patient." "But you cannot walk and you are not allowed to get up, sir," the doctor said. The chaplain was not to be deterred. "Roll my bed into the big tent and tell the guys there will be a service." From his bed he preached, and later he called this his best sermon. The text was Psalm 121.

Prayer

As the pilgrims of old were encouraged by the distant sight of Jerusalem's hills, so help us to be confident on our pilgrimage of life, knowing your assurance of a safe arrival.

Carl Tuyl *(ctuyl@rogers.com) is a retired minister living in Toronto, Ontario.*

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Warming or thawing: the debacle of the North

Brendan Kooy

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, John Diefenbaker's Conservative government pursued a policy of Arctic Sovereignty. Diefenbaker's aim was to extend the effective reach of the Canadian government to parts previously ignored, to reap the area's rich resources and to celebrate northern Canadian culture. Many Canadians thought he was crazy.

Fifty years later, Canada has another Conservative government that seeks to push the influence of the Maple Leaf north. Although this time around, Canadians do not think Prime Minister Stephen Harper is crazy. And he's not alone.

Since the discovery that possibly a third of the world's oil lies beneath the frosty surface of the north, any country in the northern hemisphere with any sort of claim to make has entered the fray for the future payout.

Russia, Denmark, the United States, and Canada have all laid claims to the north's riches thus far. Each nation has invested in new naval and marine technology – special icebreakers, submarines and deep seabed surveys. And although these nations enjoy fairly cordial relationships, there have been visible signs of political rhetoric and sabre-rattling, with each trying to establish its claim for the future.

Oil: the final frontier

It is fascinating to look back from Diefenbaker's time to present and see how much has changed. Diefenbaker's vision was ideologically driven: to encourage Canadian pride not only from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, but also to the Arctic. Since then, two major scientific discoveries have taken place: the existence of oil reserves, and their increasing accessibility, thanks to global warming.

There's a great deal of tension, however, between these two discoveries, and governments are finding themselves in a catch-22. The success of harvesting any of the Arctic's natural resources will only be possible with the continued thinning of the ice cap and the progression of global warming. Each of the nations with a stake in the north want to make a profit and improve their economies by accessing this oil, while responding to public pressure to commit to environmentally-friendly platforms.

Consequently, the clash between exploiting and protecting the Arctic's resources will have enormous significance on the political landscape of the next fifty years. The current promises of world leaders concerning the creation of green jobs and improving the environmental track record of industrialized nations will face a stiff test.

Can the globe sustain an Arctic thaw? Will society go too far in its search for further sources of oil? Or will nations make good on their promises to clean up their act and reduce the driving need for oil, fossil fuels and dirty energy sources?

The Arctic serves as a prominent bellwether for the direction that our world will take on the questions of the environment. Although on the surface the north represents a competition for influence among nations, it has far greater significance. It is a question of whether our world will continue to rely on non-renewable energy sources such as fossil fuels, or seek to actively restore climate levels to normal in places like the Arctic and put a stop to the effects of global warming.

Brendan Kooy is an Ontario representative for the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). He currently resides in Chatham, Ontario.

Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Googling at street level

In October, Google released "Street View" for several major Canadian cities. The service was first launched in the United States in 2007, but is now available in Canada along with some other countries. This new feature provided by Google lets one see a high-resolution panoramic view of neighbourhoods as they are visible from the street level. The street-level view is accessible in Google Maps by clicking and dragging on the tiny orange figure at the top of the zoom control. Various other controls allow one to pan, tilt, zoom, and travel forward and backward along the street.

These images were all taken using vehicles equipped with special cameras that capture images which are then "stitched" together to create a 360° panorama. In some instances the "stitching" of the images is not perfect, creating some interesting effects such as reports of two CN towers appearing from one view in Toronto.

I quickly checked my own home and instantly recognized that the pictures were taken on a Tuesday. How did I know? It was garbage day – and now the rag-tag collection of my garbage can, green bin, along with the blurry contents of my blue boxes are immortalized on the web. Our laundry can be seen hanging in our backyard – thankfully no undergarments are visible. I can even zoom in on my house and make out the plant standing in my living room window.

I also checked out the homes of some friends and neighbors. Although I saw nothing unseemly, I was struck by the frozen poses of many people throughout the city. Canada's privacy commissioner was also concerned and suggested that Google blur faces and license plates. I also discovered that the playground at our local school is plainly visible, and, despite the blurry faces, some children are almost recognizable.

To be sure, the service is useful for many different things. One can now visually "see" landmarks and destinations before traveling to new places. People contemplating moving can get a visual feel for potential neighborhoods. My son enjoyed retracing parts of our summer trip traveling on the scenic "Road to the Sun" in Glacier National Park. There are also some beautiful scenes visible from roads in picturesque Banff and Peggy's Cove. My wife took the opportunity to "visit" Paris (something that would difficult to do in real-life at this stage in our lives).

Thankfully I am not pictured sitting with a beer in an undershirt on my front porch. Others may not have been so fortunate. It's possible that someone who phoned in sick may be pictured in their garden or washing the car. Others may be pictured at places or establishments they ought not to be. To be sure, the pictures are all taken in a public space, but they are posted in a very public way. It isn't inconceivable that still images may one day become live video feeds. There are already numerous websites that provide live traffic cameras, and security cameras are already used in many places. These developments will force us to re-think the meaning of privacy in a digital age.

The Bible tells us that God also watches over his people. Psalm 121 talks about God's benevolent and caring watchfulness. The phrase "watch over" or "watches over" is repeated five times in this short psalm. This psalm is a comforting psalm that tells us that God watches over us continuously: he neither slumbers nor sleeps. It tells us that his watch extends everywhere: he watches over our lives and also watches over our coming and our going. God's care is real-time and is far better than any technology could provide. The next time you see surveillance cameras or perhaps even a passing vehicle mounted with special cameras, smile and remember that your Father is also watching over you in such a way that not a hair can fall from your head without the will of your Father in heaven (HC Q&A 1).

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) teaches at Redeemer University College and is a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario, which is one of Canada's cities now visible with Google Street View.

News

EU human rights report could cost Sri Lanka $100 million

Mian Ridge (CSM)

NEW DELHI – Sri Lanka came under fresh pressure to address the plight of its Tamil minority after a report from the European Union at the end of October slammed the island for its recent human rights record.

The report lodges some of the strongest international criticisms since Sri Lanka ended its war against Tamil rebels in May, and could prompt the EU to remove more than $100 million in trade concessions.

Previous criticism from abroad has had little impact on the Sri Lankan government, which remains more popular at home than ever. It said it would study the EU's report and respond by a Nov. 6 deadline.

The inquiry, conducted over the past year to determine whether the country should continue receiving trade concessions, found that Sri Lanka was in severe breach of human rights law in its final bloody push against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It should lose the concessions, the report stated.

Displaced Tamil civilians waiting to be returned to villages.

The details of the report coincide with the discovery of hundreds of Tamil asylum seekers who had fled the island, on boats bound for Canada and Australia – a reminder of the suffering faced by many of Sri Lanka's Tamils nearly half a year after the government declared the 25-year war against the LTTE, or Tamil Tigers, over.

Since the war's end in May, Western countries and the world's sizeable Tamil diaspora have pressed for some kind of accountability for thousands of Tamil deaths and human rights violations during the last phase of fighting.

There have also been repeated calls for the immediate release of more than 200,000 Tamils who remain in camps in the island's north.

But at home, plaudits

Despite castigations from abroad, Sri Lanka's government is more popular at home than ever, after winning what many had viewed as an unwinnable war.

Sinhalese constitute around 74 percent of Sri Lanka's population and Tamils around 18 percent. Their discrimination as the minority helped fuel the Tamil Tigers' long war.

Last week, Sri Lanka announced it would hold both presidential and parliamentary elections before next April – two years ahead of schedule. The announcement followed President Mahinda Rajapaksa's eighth decisive victory in provincial elections. Victory in general polls seems almost certain for the ardent Sinhalese nationalist.

Mr. Rajapaksa has said he will wait until after the vote to introduce political reforms aimed at addressing Tamil grievances. He speaks often of the need for reconciliation, but critics are growing more skeptical about what this might mean in practice.

On October 19, the New York-based Human Rights Watch said a new commitment from the government to return 100,000 of the original 273,000 displaced people stuck in camps "breaks a promise to camp residents and the international community."

In May, the government had said 80 percent of the displaced people would be able to return home by the end of the year.

Previous criticism from abroad has had little impact on the Sri Lankan government

"Enough is enough," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, in a statement. "It is well past time to release civilians detained in the camps. Sri Lanka's international friends should tell the government that they will not accept any more broken promises."

The EU's report provides evidence of police violence, torture, and breaches of employment laws, notably the use of underage children.

EU: Sri Lanka's biggest export market

The concessions at stake made the EU Sri Lanka's largest export market in 2008, accounting for 36 percent of all exports. Garments earned the country a record $3.47 billion from EU markets and were its biggest source of foreign exchange, followed by remittances and tea.

At the end of October, 76 migrants believed to be Tamils fleeing the island were arrested on a ship off Canada's coast. There are reports that a further 255 Tamil migrants, who couldn't afford to board that vessel, paid instead for a passage to Australia. They were intercepted in Indonesia and given temporary asylum.

Home-grown spuds are the best!

Country living
Meindert van der Galien

Recent studies in Canada and in the U.K. have found that organic food is not more nutritious than traditional food.

I'm not so sure. Maybe there's no difference in nutrition, but I'm positive that organic food is better tasting than the heavily fertilized variety. I know from experience that there is a huge difference in taste and quality.

Many backyard gardeners gave up growing potatoes years ago because potatoes are so inexpensive in the stores.

Canadian farmers planted an estimated 378,000 acres of potatoes this year. That's 2,300 acres less than last year. U.S. farmers planted slightly over a million acres – almost the same as last year. But China is now the world's largest potato-producing country, and nearly a third of the world's potatoes are harvested in China and India.

There are about 5,000 potato varieties worldwide. The geographic shift of potato production has been away from wealthier countries toward lower income areas of the world.

Will Chinese-grown potatoes end up in Canadian stores sometime? That's a scary thought. Will we see processed potatoes from China? Certainly! Did you ever think we'd have Chinese honey in our supermarkets, and it flooding our market?

Growing your own spuds is worth the effort because your garden spuds will win in taste and longevity. Yes longevity. Your home-grown ones will last (in storage) a lot longer. Potatoes have to be handled with care. They bruise easily.

It's been at least 30 years since we last grew our own potatoes. It didn't make sense growing potatoes, especially when summers were so busy. But in recent years I was dissatisfied with store-bought potatoes. Sure, they were inexpensive but sometimes the potatoes were awful.

Potato growers fertilize their crop quite heavily. That might be profitable for the grower, but what about taste and quality of the potato?

Home-grown potatoes best

This past summer I did an experiment. I grew 100 potato plants on organic soil and grew them without any fertilizer. What a crop!

They are mostly big ones weighing over a pound apiece. Many are one and a half pounds. A few weigh one and three-quarter pounds. The big surprise is that I haven't seen a hollow or bad one. I gave spuds away to family and friends to see how they liked them. They loved the taste.

You are probably wondering about the organic soil. Back in the late 1970s we had a bulldozer clear some bush land stumps and fence rows. There was an old orchard nearby that had grown wild over the years, and I had the bulldozer take it out. Some of the topsoil, rotted wood and stumps were all bulldozed into a pile. Over the years I turned the pile over with the loader and always marveled at the soil texture. It's a grainy loose clay soil full of organic matter.

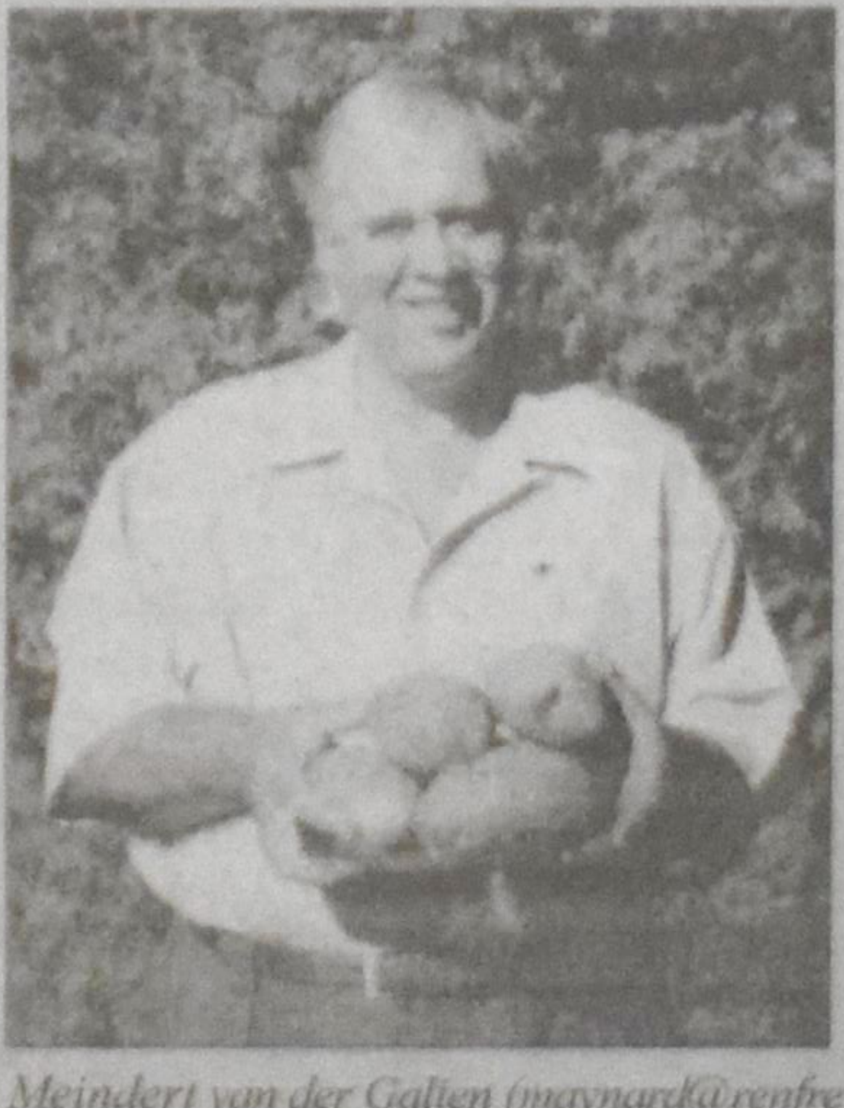
Some of that soil was added to our little garden where we grow beans, lettuce, radish, beets, carrots, cucumbers and two dozen tomato plants.

The soil for my experimental potato patch was dumped on the edge of a hayfield (near the soil pile) in a row that is six feet wide and about 18-inches deep. I leveled it with the tractor loader, dug little holes, threw in a bit of old crumbly manure and planted the cut-up seed potatoes.

The plants grew like I had never seen before. The wet summer was ideal for gardens. There was no space between the rows; it was all stems and leaves. I couldn't hill the plants because of all the foliage. By early August I wondered if I'd have potatoes. Did the growth all go into the green stuff? I pulled up a plant and, to my delight, dug up a dozen beautiful large white potatoes along with numerous small ones. The ground was still soft and loose. We had them for supper that evening. My wife said they were the best tasting potatoes she ever had.

The potatoes grew among small chunks of rotted wood that hadn't fully decomposed. I harvested the crop in mid-September. I'd say 70 per cent of the potatoes are large ones weighing over a pound each. There are no blue or bad parts to cut away.

I won't be buying table potatoes this winter or next spring – just a half bag of seed potatoes.

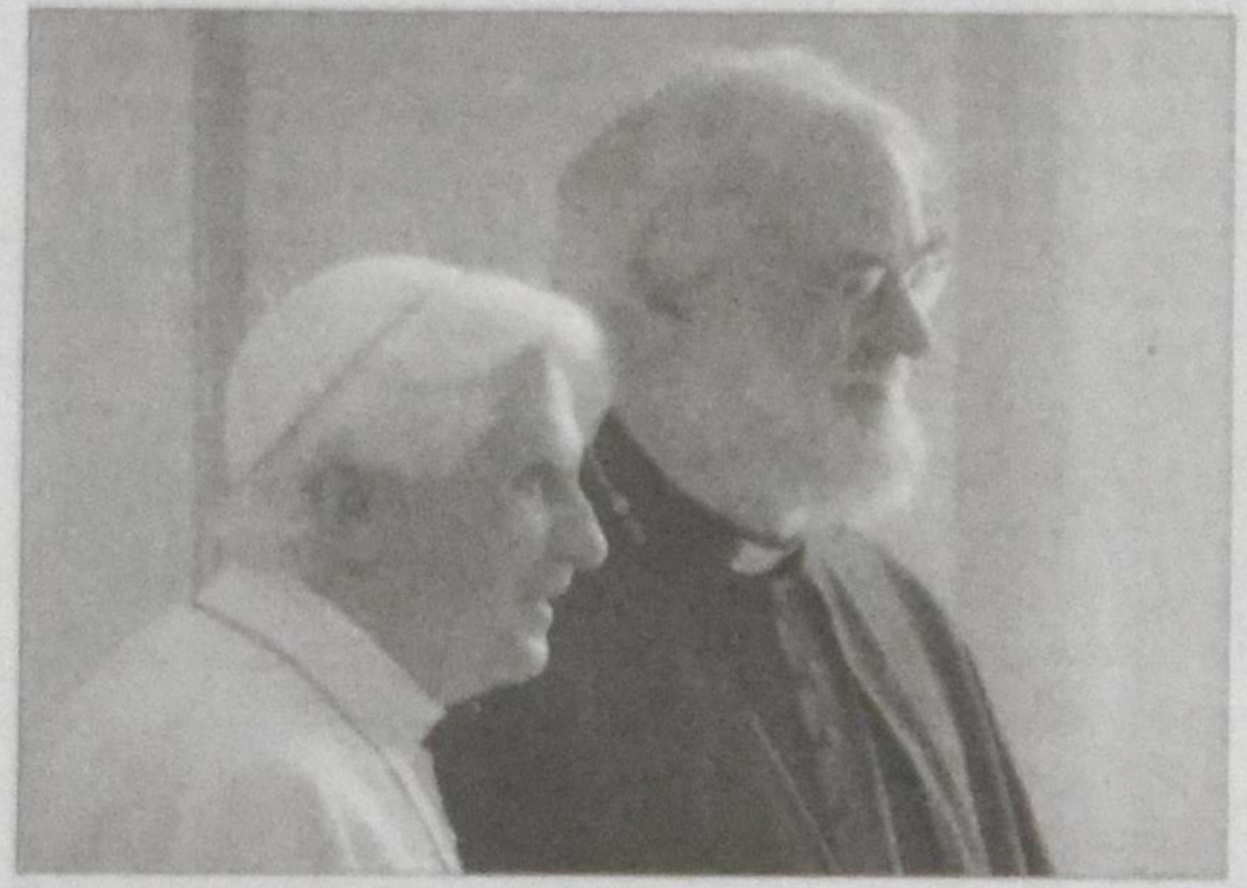


Meindert van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) holding a plate of his 1 to 1 3/4 lb. potatoes is a Renfrew-area (Ottawa Valley) farmer and agricultural writer.

Pope's welcome of Anglicans marks 'end of an era'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNA) – Pope Benedict has announced a new provision that permits Anglicans who believe what Catholics believe (many of whom call themselves "traditional Anglicans" or "Anglo-Catholics") to become Catholics *en masse*. It allows parishes and dioceses to be set up so that they may maintain their own traditions, i.e, they may be set up based on their Anglican background and not merely geographically, as Catholic parishes (and most Christian congregations) usually are.

That announcement marks the "end of an era" in Anglican-Catholic relations, says Catholic commentator George Weigel. It shows a widening "theological gulf" between Anglican leadership and the Christian tradition.



Pope Benedict and Archbishop Williams

Writing in *The Washington Post's* "On Faith" blog, Weigel recounts how Anglican-Catholic relations reached a peak around the time of the Second Vatican Council. However, in the following decades some Anglican leaders appeared to be distancing themselves from the apostolic tradition on the priesthood and the sacraments.

Weigel discusses an exchange of letters in the 1980s between Pope John Paul II, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, then the head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

From theological to sociological

Asked by the Catholic prelates to explain why parts of the Anglican Communion had decided to ordain women as priests, Weigel recalls that Archbishop Runcie replied in "largely sociological, rather than theological terms." The then-senior prelate in the Church of England cited women's changing roles in business, culture and politics as a justification for the novel practice.

When the exchange of letters ended in 1986, a "parting of the ways" had been reached. Catholic authorities believed (and still do) that apostolic tradition precludes the ordination of women to the priesthood, while Archbishop Runcie and similarly-minded Anglicans believed (and still do) that "contemporary human insights into gender roles trumped apostolic tradition and necessitated a development of both doctrine and practice," says Weigel.

"Rome could not accept that as a legitimate development of Christian self-understanding," Weigel explains, reporting that Catholic leaders feared the new Anglican approach would cause the revision of their teachings on many other issues, such as sexual morality. That has indeed been the case, and the current rift on approaches to homosexuality is large and growing.

Pope Benedict has now offered Anglicans (who dissent from their church's positions) a "path into full communion" with the Catholic Church that "honors the distinctiveness of their spiritual and liturgical traditions."

CRWRC recognized by Canadian government for refugee work

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has been recognized by the government of Canada for its role in sponsoring refugee families and welcoming them into Canada.

"It has been 30 years since the first private sponsorship application was submitted in Canada," said Kathleen O'Shea, a Citizenship and Immigration officer with Citizenship and Immigration Canada in Hamilton, Ontario.

To mark this anniversary, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism Jason Kenny recognized sponsorship agreement holders across Canada with a letter of thanks and acknowledgement. The letter was delivered by O'Shea during a ceremony at the Christian Reformed Church's Canadian headquarters in Burlington, Ontario.

There are about 90 sponsorship agreement holders across Canada, including CRWRC. Each agreement holder is a community organization, church, or diocese which works with the federal government to bring refugee families to Canada and help them get settled into their new life.

"Canada is unique among nations welcoming refugees because it is the only country that allows sponsorship capabilities by private organizations. The Christian Reformed Church was in the original group of churches that signed a sponsorship agreement back in 1979," says Rose Dekker, CRWRC's refugee co-ordinator.

To carry out this task, CRWRC works with Christian Reformed congregations across Canada to help them sponsor refugees and provide those refugees with housing, supplies and fellowship during their first months in Canada.

"Since it began its refugee sponsorship program, CRWRC has helped to bring approximately 2,500 refugee families or about 6,850 people to Canada," says Dekker.

Kathleen O'Shea and Rose Dekker

Globe & Mail, NY Times blast Vatican; other voices calmer

Marian Van Til

TORONTO – The editors of *The Globe and Mail*, the country's second most popular newspaper, have lashed out at the Vatican's decision to permit Anglican communities to join the Catholic Church as communities (see accompanying story, this page). Meanwhile, a *National Post* columnist said "amen to a good offer."

The Globe editors wrote, "The Vatican's welcome of some Anglicans into the Roman Catholic Church is a Trojan horse. In the face of an inflexible hierarchy, liberal Catholic voices have had little effect; the grudging loyalty of those who remain is in jeopardy. The Vatican announcement will make the Catholic Church more conservative and the Anglican church more liberal. Is that what ecumenism is meant to accomplish?"

Similar criticisms were made by a *New York Times* commentator who charged the Pope with fostering "cafeteria Catholicism."

Some other writers, however, see the Pope's offer differently. Fr. Raymond J. de Souza, writing in *The National Post*, asserted that "simple prudence means finding other workable measures for unity today, as in fact the two communities are moving farther apart, not closer together, on matters of doctrine." He added, "The unity of the church, Pope Benedict said at his inaugural papal Mass, was his first duty. He has creatively made a significant step forward in discharging that duty."

Ruth Gledhill, religion correspondent for *The Times* of London, quoted Britain's National Secular Society, writing that it was left to that non-Christian group "to say publicly what many Anglicans would only admit privately. 'This is a mortal blow to Anglicanism which will inevitably lead to disestablishment as the Church shrinks yet further and become increasingly irrelevant,' it said. 'Rowan Williams has failed dismally in his ambitions to avoid schism. His refusal to take a principled moral stand against bigotry has left his Church in tatters.'"

BBC slurs evangelicals in home-school debate

LONDON, UK (TCI) – Some evangelical parents need monitoring by the state because they may "intimidate" their children with ideas about God, sin and hell, a BBC radio host has said. The government's Schools Minister then replied saying that such "intimidation" is part of the reason for conducting a review of the rules on home education.

The comments were made on BBC Radio 4's "Sunday Programme," broadcast in mid-October. The program featured an item on the British government's controversial proposals for regulating parents who choose to educate their children at home. The show's host, Roger Bolton, spoke of "authoritarian" evangelical fathers of "Victorian periods," who threatened their children with theology.

Bolton was interviewing Schools Minister Diana Johnson and went on to say, "Some people will worry that this is possible now under home tuition, that this could happen. And you would not be able to do anything about it because people would just say, 'we're simply telling them what we believe.'" That's when Johnson told Bolton that "that's part of the reason why we have asked [for] this review, because at the moment we don't know what's happening."

The Schools Minister added that the government wants to make sure "there is a process once a year to find out what is happening in the home in terms of the education," and wants education officials to have the right to interview home-schooled children without their parents being present.

In June a group of British MPs said home-schooling families risk being hounded as the government conducts its third review of the law in four years. MP Mark Field said the government should examine its own failure to deal with child abuse scandals before pointing its finger at home-schoolers.

Student initiative gets 'offensive' lights replaced at Calvin College

Marian Van Til, *with files from Calvin College*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – When four Calvin College astronomy students noticed that light pollution was interfering with their use of the observatory on campus, they set out to do something about it.

The lights immediately outside Calvin's science building were particularly "offensive." The domed campus observatory is connected to the science building. The outdoor lights there were of a style referred to as the "China hat" (see photo). Much of the light produced by that type of fixture, the students found during an analysis of the outdoor lighting on campus, is wasted or travels upwards, away from the fixture's intended target on the ground.

"Some of the lights in that area were so intrusive they produced shadows on the observatory walls," said Calvin astronomy professor Deb Haarsma. Haarsma worked with four students from her Modern Observational Astronomy class to study, then remedy the situation, if possible. Then-students Kathy Hoogeboom ('08), Jessie Taylor ('08), John Vander Heide ('08) and Jess Vriesema ('09) did the analysis.

Shielding helps focus light

If the China hat wasted light, it was found that two other fixture designs – the "shepherd's crook" and the "cobra" – were better at focusing light because they are shielded, resulting in less light pollution.

"The contrast between straining to see any stars from a bright city street to the shock of seeing the Milky Way in its full glory spilled across a dark sky quickly illustrates the problem of light pollution," said Jessie Taylor. "This difference in viewing conditions also results in noticeable differences in astronomical data. As pollution problems go, light pollution is fairly easy to fix. Simply replace the offending lights with ones aiming light in the useful direction – at the ground where people need it to see."

Armed with their data, the students asked the Calvin administration to consider replacing the lights. "These lights directly limit the ability of the observatory and the observers who work there to teach people about the night sky," they wrote. "Being able to see interesting objects in the sky is crucial for all astronomy classes as well as for those from the college and its community who visit the observatory." The students also reported that newer lighting would be more energy efficient.

At left, the "offensive" lights. At right, the new light casting its rays only on the path below.

A student-administration collaboration

The report was well-received. "This was one of those projects that when it came to the cabinet for review seemed to have significant benefits all the way around," said Henry De Vries, vice president of administration and finance. "It was clear it would be helpful from an academic perspective and from a facilities perspective would help us get more efficient and appropriate lighting for the middle of campus."

The $60,000 (US) project was funded by the plant fund reserve and the lights were replaced just before the beginning of the current academic year. "The new lights have made a marked and noticeable difference in the darkness of the observatory area," says senior Melissa Haegert. "I can't see anymore the white glare against the roof of the [observatory] dome as we turn the telescope past the path lights, and the students and I no longer have to worry about losing our night vision when we walk out onto the deck."

For the students involved in the initial study (though all have since graduated), the response is rewarding. "I learned that a class study really can change things," says Vriesema. "It is exciting to see that the work we did a year and half ago is now paying off, and that future astronomy students and guests will have a better experience when visiting our observatory."

International Year of Astronomy

The emphasis on reducing light pollution coincides well with the International Year of Astronomy 2009, Prof. Haarsma notes.

This year marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo's telescopic observations, which revolutionized our view of the universe. "Astronomers are trying to raise awareness and encouraging people to discover the night skies for themselves," says Haarsma. "It's a lot easier to do without light pollution."

Redeemer gets top grades

Tim Wolfert

ANCASTER, Ont (RUC) – Redeemer University College has earned an "A+" in Overall Student Satisfaction in *The Globe & Mail's* Canadian University Report which was released on October 22.

The newspaper's annual survey of student satisfaction, produced in partnership with the Strategic Counsel and Higher Education Strategy Associates, graded 53 universities.

The survey asked 38,000 Canadian university students about their experiences in a variety of areas.

Redeemer scored high marks in many categories; for example: quality of education (A+), building and facilities (A), student-faculty interaction (A+), ease of course registration (A), campus atmosphere (A+), quality of teaching (A), class sizes (A+), student services (A-), overall student satisfaction with university (A+), libraries (A-), student residences (A+) and personal security (A+).

Redeemer students ranked their university as above the average score in 40 of the 55 criteria. "We are very pleased students rank Redeemer so highly in so many important areas," says Richard Wikkerink, associate vice-president for student development and the registrar at Redeemer. "It is especially gratifying that students are so satisfied with the quality of education they receive, and with our campus atmosphere. Those results are a testament to the work of our faculty and staff in creating a Christian academic community."

Redeemer's president, Dr. Justin Cooper, sees a larger trend in the survey. "These results speak well for Christian universities and for all small universities across Canada," he notes. "The strong scores of those in the 'Very Small' category are an affirmation of the role that these institutions have in our national system."

This was Redeemer's fourth year of participation in the survey. Redeemer is categorized universities having enrolments of less than 4,000 students.

Plantinga to step down as Calvin Seminary president

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. has informed the Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) board of trustees that he will step down as president of the institution at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year.

"Kathleen [his wife] and I have prayed earnestly about this decision and have made it freely and joyfully," Plantinga wrote in a letter to the board. "I give thanks to God for so many blessings ... including warm relationships with donors, trustees, and alumni, a strong faculty and staff, wonderful students and a supportive denomination. I'll leave my post with satisfaction."

Under Planting's leadership the seminary has instituted numerous changes in order to make itself more relevant to today's society, at the same time keeping its commitment to Reformed doctrine and teaching.

Among the changes were the formation of the Making Connections Initiative, the Center for Excellence in Preaching, development of a large number of new donors, a greatly enhanced continuing education program and a new curriculum built from scratch to form students for ministry.

The curriculum helps to streamline the requirements necessary for men and women to receive their Master of Divinity Degree while enriching their training for biblical, authentic, contextual and life-changing ministry, says the seminary. Changes have been made to other degree programs as well. And this year has seen the instituting of a new certificate program that allows for continuing education without students being required to take all of the courses that lead to a higher degree.

Plantinga studied at Calvin College, Yale University, Calvin Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. Ordained in the CRC in 1971, he served as pastor of the Webster Christian Reformed Church near Rochester, New York, and then as a professor of systematic theology at CTS from 1979 to 1996.

In the summer of 1996, he became the first-ever Dean of the Chapel at Calvin College. In January, 2002, he became the sixth president of the seminary. He has written and helped to edit several books.

In response to his letter of resignation, the Board of Calvin Theological Seminary offered its gratitude and appreciation to Plantinga "for his leadership since 2001 as President of Calvin Theological Seminary. We acknowledge and accept the decision of Dr. Plantinga to end his tenure as President at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year."

"We want to make it clear, though, that he will continue his relationship with the seminary. We're still looking at what that will look like," says Rev. Julius Medenblik, chair of the CTS board.

Children's Picture Book Reviews

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

One of the greatest pleasures I enjoyed with my children was reading picture books to them. Snuggled together on the couch, we shared warmth and wonder as we turned pages, met interesting people and animals, laughed at mishaps and sighed because of sorrowful scenes. Whether you're a parent or a grandparent, you can give the gift of a good book to a child. And when you do so, you can give a gift to yourself, as well, by asking the child for the privilege of reading the book out loud together.

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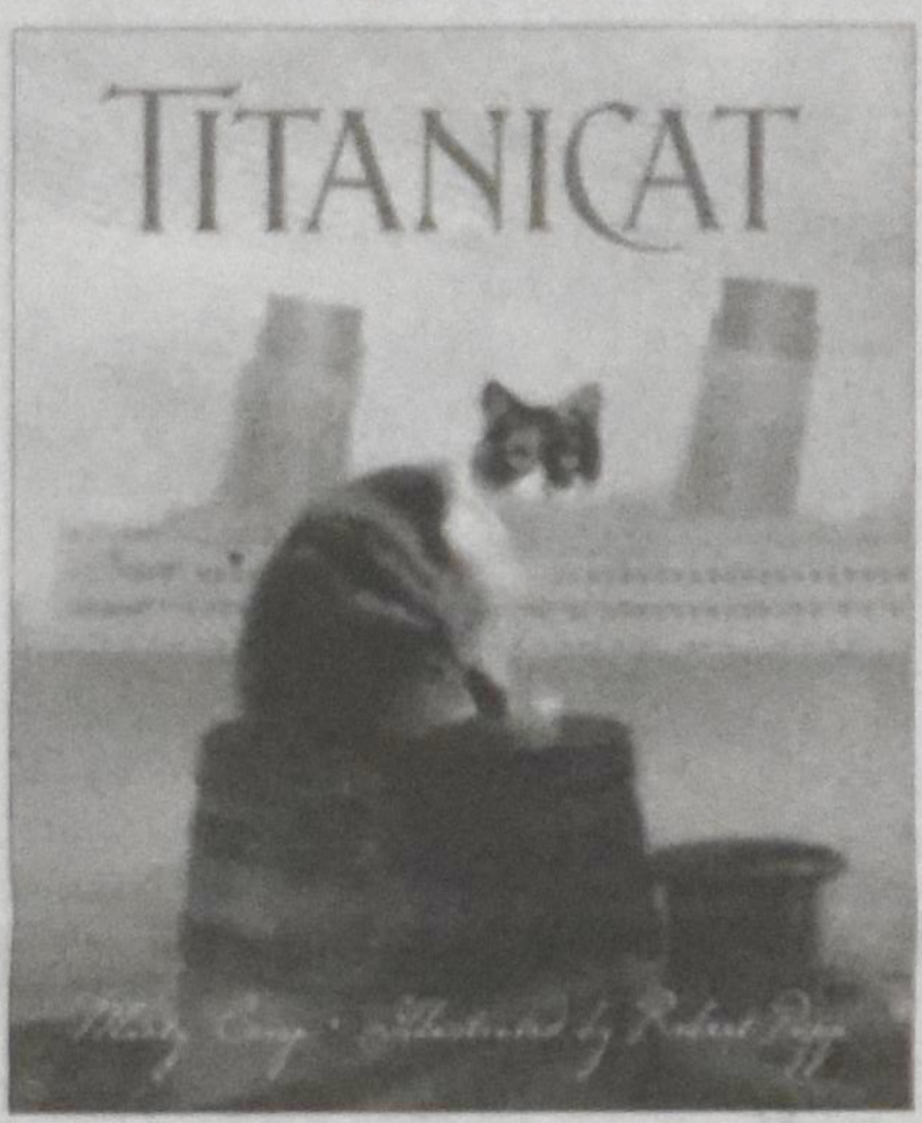

Titanicat by Marty Crisp. Illustrated by Robert Papp. (Sleeping Bear Press, 2008) Ages 6-10

Teenaged Jim feels lucky to be a crew member on Titanic's first voyage. On board, he notices a calico cat, and, when assigned to care for it, enthusiastically agrees to do so. Keeping track of a cat who loves to hide on a ship that is four city blocks long is no easy task. When Jim finally finds her, he also discovers her three kittens.

While working on deck and dreaming of going to America, he keeps the kittens nearby. Two days into the voyage, the Titanic docks in Southampton. Jim looks over the ship's railing and spots the cat going down the gangplank, carrying a kitten in her mouth. Once she deposits him safely in a coil of rope, she dashes back on board and carries another kitten off the ship.

Jim finds the third kitten, and, when he hears the call, "all ashore who's going ashore," he makes a life-changing decision without realizing it. Wanting to reunite the kitten with her mother, Jim races off the boat and delivers the tiny creature to its family. As a result, the ship leaves without him.

Six days later, Jim learns that Titanic sank. His name is posted on the list stating "Missing." He is grateful to be alive, and thankful for the cat who led him off the ship.

Based on a true story, *Titanicat* gives young readers both a vivid picture of Titanic's grandeur and insight into sailors' world view. The book's emphasis on luck, though obviously secular, can prove to be a good starting point to discuss the truth of God's providential care.

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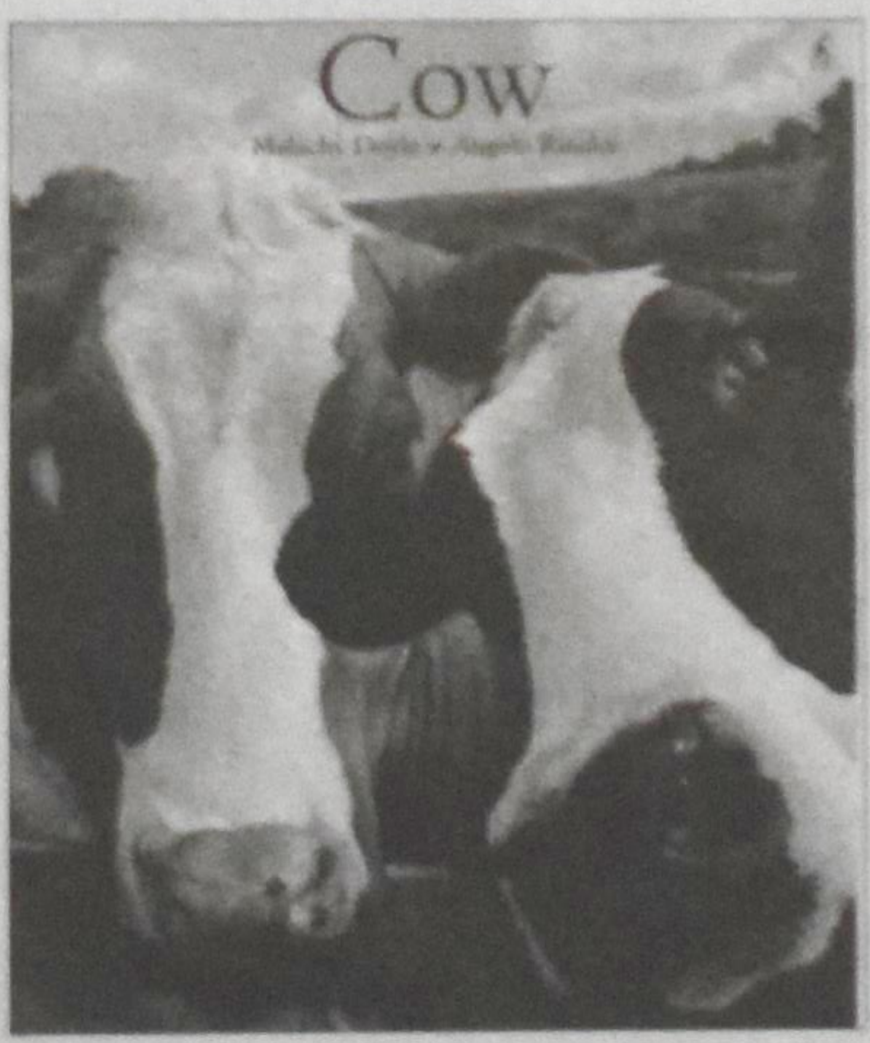
Cow by Malachy Doyle. Illustrated by Angelo Rinaldo. (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2002) Ages 4-8

Employing simple, lyrical text, author Malachy Doyle makes it clear that the cows portrayed on one family's farm are valued for more than just their ability to produce milk. Resting in the morning haze, grazing in the hot sun, heading to the barn at milking time, chewing their cuds, or drinking from the cool river, the cows are celebrated for the fascinating creatures that they are. Rinaldo's beautiful illustrations capture not only the unique bodies and characters of cows, but also portray the rhythm and atmosphere of a farm family's life.



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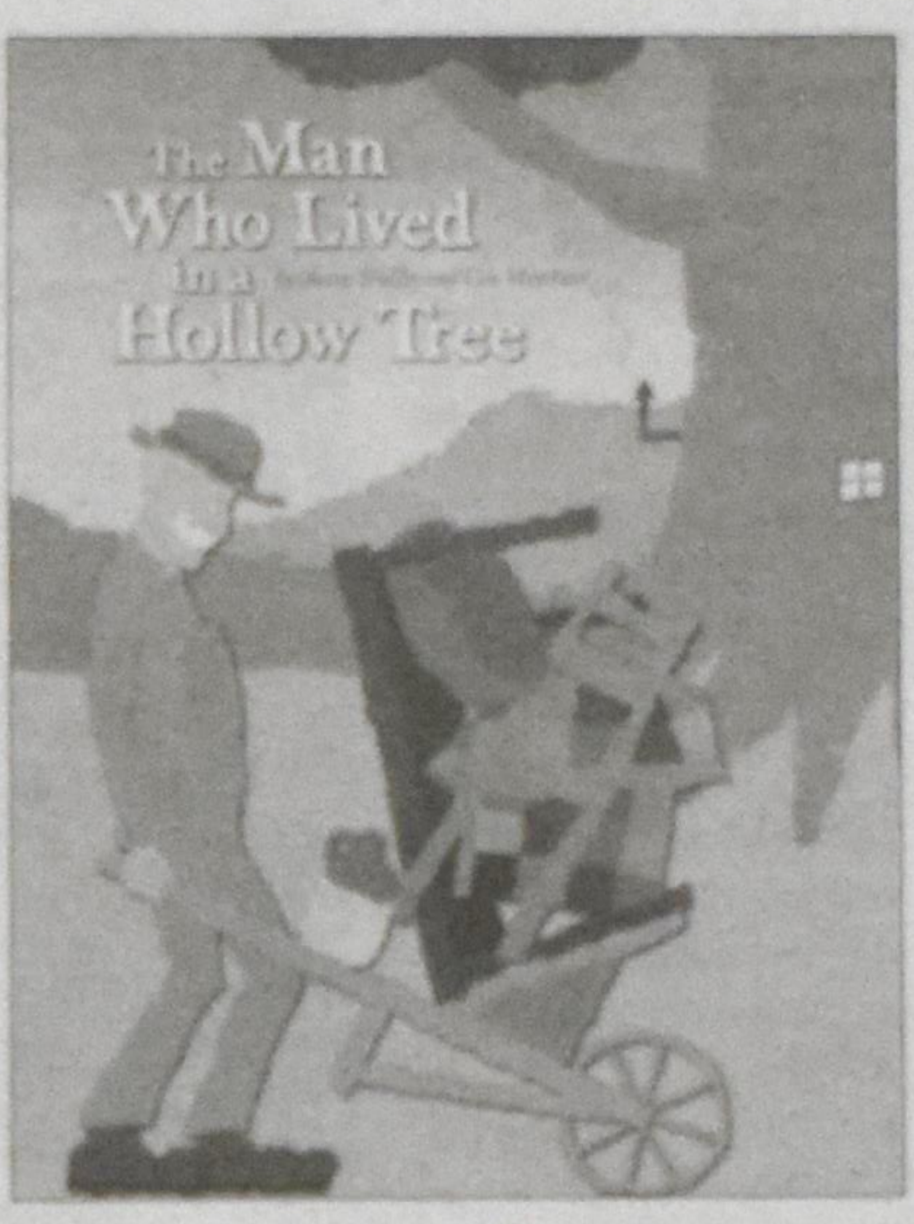
The Man Who Lived in a Hollow Tree by Anne Shelby. Illustrated by Cor Hazelaar. (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2009) Ages 4-7

Anne Shelby's playful tall tale, based on an Appalachian legend handed down in her family, introduces children to Harlan Burch, who lives in the hollow of a sycamore tree "way back in the mountains, way back in time." Of course, the sycamore is much larger than trees are today. In fact, all trees were bigger then!

Harlan is a carpenter who makes "everything from cradles to coffins." That means that he has to cut down many trees. However, being a conscientious man, he plants two trees for every tree that he cuts down.

Harlan lives for many years in the tree, until he becomes an old man. But then something unusual happens. He becomes young again! So, he dances with a woman, courts her, and finally the



two are married. Soon the sycamore tree is overflowing with children. After that Harlan lives – till the day he dies at 142 years of age. Though deceased, his descendants and the trees he planted continue to populate the mountains.

Cor Hazelaar's earth-tone illustrations capture the natural world of this story's setting. Throughout, the illustrator includes quilt squares which incorporate what he learned while researching Appalachian plants, animals, history, tradition, and crafts.

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Flotsam by David Wiesner. (Clarion Books, 2006) Ages 5 and up

While a Caucasian boy explores at the beach, he is swamped by a wave which washes up an underwater camera. He removes the film, has it developed, buys a new roll of film, puts it in the camera, and returns to the beach. When he looks at the photos, he is astonished by what he sees – fish swimming (one with its mechanical parts exposed), octopuses resting on living room furniture, flying turtles with cities made of sea shells on their backs, and many other sea creatures engaged in various activities.

But what astonishes him most is the photo of an Oriental girl holding a photo of an Icelandic boy, who is holding a photo of another child from another place and time. Using his microscope, he sees clearly that the sequence continues back in time, and discovers who these many children are.

The boy makes a decision. He sets up the camera, takes a picture of himself holding the picture of the Oriental girl with its photo history of other children, and hurls the camera into the ocean, hoping to connect with another child in another time or place. Transported by various sea creatures, the camera is eventually washed up on a southern shore and discovered by a girl.

Told exclusively through pictures, *Flotsam* captures the longing children have to discover treasure, it explores their need to connect to other children, and it celebrates the diversity of sea creatures and God's children throughout the world.

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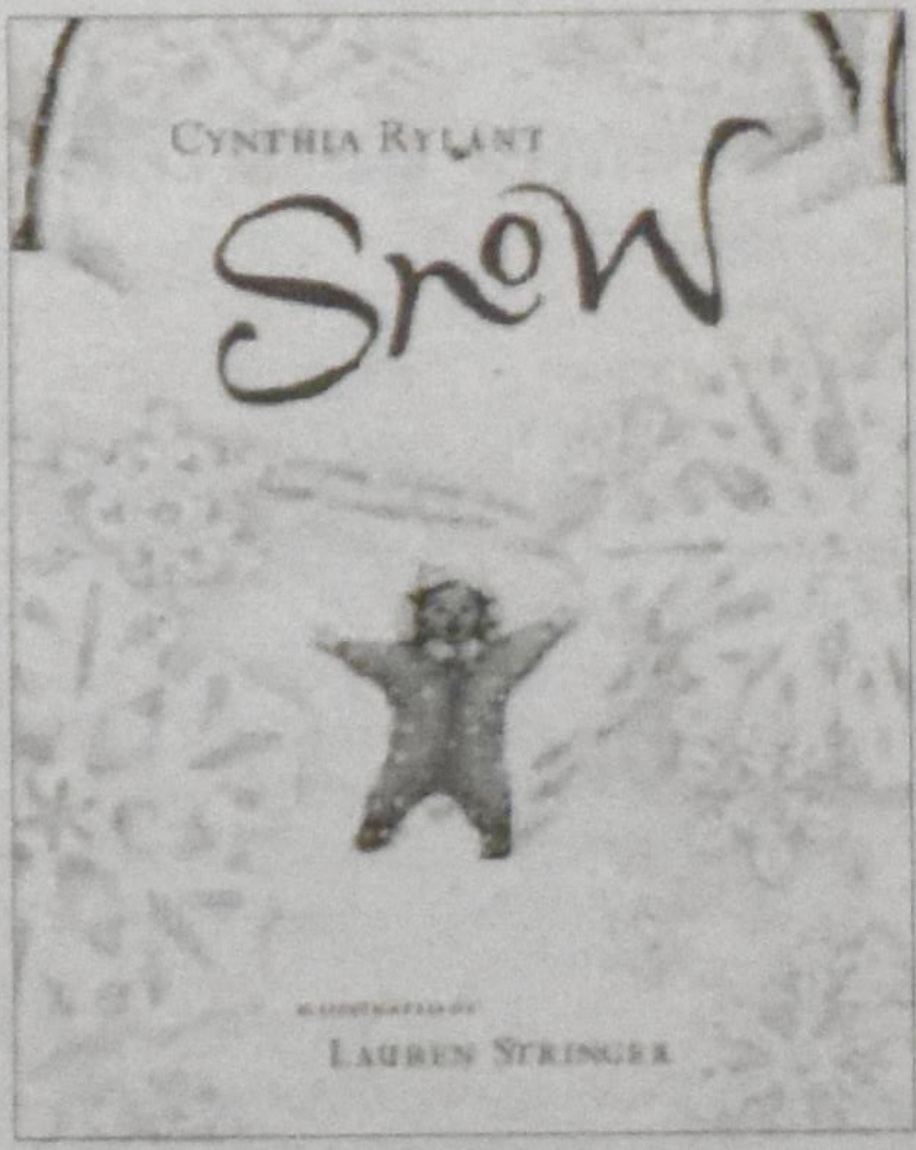
Snow by Cynthia Rylant. Illustrated by Lauren Stringer. (Harcourt, 2008) Ages 4-8

Cynthia Rylant's gentle text celebrates the various countenances of snow and its impact on people. Sometimes snow "comes softly in the night, like a shy friend afraid to knock, so she thinks she'll just wait in the yard until you see her." Sometimes snow falls in "fat, cheerful flakes." At other times, it falls lightly.

However it arrives, it has an impact on people. Sleeping under thick quilts on a snowy night feels peaceful. Being sent home from school or work because of a snow storm is liberating and exciting. Reading with a loving grandparent as snow falls lightly outside feels safe and warm. Making snowmen and snow angels with a friend is exhilarating and fun.



Lauren Stringer's vibrant illustrations portray a diverse community where children of all backgrounds play in harmony, and where older people take the time to nurture and love children.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, ON. She has recently published her first children's picture book, Monzi and Mama's Stories, which can be ordered at sonyavf55@hotmail.com

Poems

The poetry of Geert Boogaard

Geert Boogaard was born in Enkhuizen in 1908 and died in the same city in 1990. When he was young, his relatives and friends urged him to study for the ministry, but, at that time, Geert experienced some personal problems with the church and thought that a calling to the ministry would be too overwhelming. Instead, he became a high school teacher. Later on in life he felt called to the ministry and became the pastor of the Reformed Church in Andijk, which was close to the place of his birth.

Geert Boogaard was a talented poet, who in his poetry refers to issues related to his work in the congregation and relations in his family. Most of his poems are written in free verse, a form that facilitates translation. Boogaard paints with words, and his readers often feel empathy for those he portrays as having difficulties. Boogaard dealt with problems we encounter also in today's world.

Geert Boogaart's poetry has been translated into English by Kornelis Johannes Boot, who was born in 1932 in Ellemeet, The Netherlands. He immigrated to Canada in 1950. He later moved to the U.S. and taught mathematics and German at Lynden Christian High School, Lynden, Washington from1966 till 1969. He then became a professor of linguistics at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa and taught there from 1969 till 2000. At this time he and his wife, Aly, live in Vernon, B.C.

My mother and I

I sat under the kerosene lamp
mother, and I had finally
finally had forgotten
forgotten to look
at the clock and
was awestruck
and said that
you were so
startled
because it was already
a half an hour later
than otherwise
and paramount time
for us together mother
a paramount
happiness.

Geert Boogaard: 'Niet zonder hoop'.

My parents and I

These two then
were my father
and my mother
I did become one
out of a moment
of their being one.

Blood is destination
an inescapable
arrangement
a have to be
as you are
body and soul.

There is an inheritance
of light and shadow
they will follow us
till judgment day
wherein I will stand
together with father
and mother.

There is no shadow.
Only light.

Geert Boogaard: 'Niet zonder hoop," p. 29.

My granddaughter and I

We are sitting close together
my granddaughter
and I.

There is a small pinkish
finger playing on
my big right
hand.

The hand is old already
and one of the sinews is
shriveled, the little
finger grew
crooked.

The big hand is very old
already and the little pinky
only arrived recently

I don't want to continue
making comparisons
because there is
a dream for
every age.

My own dream
I can do
impossibly without.

In the meantime
almost saturated
with days I went
while dreaming
past death
and dying.

Geert Boogaard 'Brood en Wijn' 'Mijn kleindochter en ik'.

A Down'a syndrome child

First we thought: had
you never become
in the womb of
your mother,
but never
had come.

You became a silent
story of intimacy,
a very piercing
happiness and
a unique life.

You are a comfort
around us, as
a friend from
another
world.

You smile at
whatever
comes,
at any
day,
as one of an
everlasting
and happy
beginning.

Geert Boogaard, 'Brood en Wijn', 'Mongooltje'.

Poem for Our Child

You were conceived to be delivered
the cord that tied you to your mother
had to be broken
to let you live.

We may never forget:
we don't own you.
We don't have you,
you have us,
to lead you
to protect you
to keep you from fear
to tell you
that we are not afraid
when it thunders
and to sing with you during the night.

We are spectators
at the rim of your life
we may observe you
when you play
and we smile at you
when you are overwhelmed

by what you see and do.

We see you slowly become who you are
we hold the gate open to your happiness
and attempt to prevent
that you become
what you shouldn't be.

You have many questions:
When you ask about God
we tell you about Jesus,
when you ask about death
we tell you about life,
when you ask where you come from
then we will say:
out of the world of love.

There comes a time
when you may leave us
you are here to do that,
you may complete your departure.
All what we do for you is tentative.
You must not become us.
You must become yourself.
You must become after which you strife:
your own wonder.

We hope
you will always
appear in our prayers.

We hope that you will become happy,
alive in creation,
man and woman,
walking in the light
of forgiving,
and expecting the Kingdom.

You may go.
you must do it:
It is a commandment,
a promise.
Go in peace.

Geert Boogaard, 'Gedicht voor ons kind'.

Note: *More Geert Boogaard poems on following pages.*

Full of new wine

Some, however, made fun of them and said,
"They have had too much wine."
Acts 2:13

Abraham Kuyper

There is a deep rift that entered our human existence in Paradise, which, sad to say, cannot be healed until the fulfillment of the *Maranatha* [Lord, come quickly]. For then the Lord will return on the clouds of heaven, as King of Glory. Now he still resides in the Highest Heaven, and rules our world from there. But then he will demonstrate his grace in action one last time, leaving his heavenly home for the second time to return to this earth. That is when finally the deep rift that now cuts through our human lives will be healed. *But no sooner!*

When Jesus returns, Paradise, or even something better than Paradise, will come. Then we will not only hear the angels singing, "Peace on earth" as a prayer and the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise, but then will come that promised *eternal* peace for this world, never again to be disrupted. Tender love will then have endless sovereignty, for it is the sovereignty of the Prince of Peace. The heavenly *Son of David* will reign throughout the entire earth from one city of peace, the *New Jerusalem*.

But this has not yet come about for it is still *not* possible. Whenever people try to pretend that this heaven on earth is already here, they cover up the rift, and our Lord God will punish them dreadfully for their guilt in denying his *decrees*. Their attempts are really nothing but a denial of the work still to be done by the King of Peace. It is like saying that the second coming of Jesus is *not really necessary*. "LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us." (Isaiah 26:12). This is the prophetic song of praise with which the church awaits the return of the Bridegroom. But woe to us if we pretend that the eternal peace will be given in any way other than his return on the clouds of heaven. This peace will not come sooner!

An Eastern Orthodox icon of Pentecost. This is the Icon of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. At the bottom is an allegorical figure, called Kosmos, which symbolizes the world.

"Full of new wine" – in that mocking laughter of the crowd, we find the tension of the great rift among us, even now on Pentecost Sunday.

The human heart searches and longs for new life. Our very being looks for stimulation, anything to take away our desperate and feeble feeling of weakness. You may at times sense a tingling in your blood, only to discover that you are too lukewarm to respond in faith. That's why our hearts cry out for more devotion and holy zeal. And yet there are so many ways in which our merciful God has already granted such stimulation as a gift of grace.

Long ago at the Red Sea, the Israelites, as a people freed from slavery, sang the joyful song of deliverance. Jubilant songs of praise rose up from hearts overwhelmed by God's goodness. And from that moment on songs of praise accompanied the people of Israel as they travelled. God's salvation surrounded them like a fortress. The desert bloomed! The fragrance of roses permeated the wilderness.

Yet, the most important event was yet to come. It tarried even after the manger in Bethlehem. For the great songs of praise of the angel choirs in the fields of Ephrata around Bethlehem faded and seemed to disappear at Gethsemane and at Golgotha.

Now, however, at Pentecost, the moment had really come. At last the Spirit of the Father and of the Son himself had descended! Rich, gentle, and yet as an overflowing stream the Spirit is poured out over the flock of the Lord. And now we see a most blessed awakening, as the Spirit generates a glorious zeal. We see it in the passionate language of these ordinary fishermen from Galilee, who proclaimed the glory of the Lord with manifold praises from the very Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Just what impression did the people in Jerusalem get from this event? They turn to accusations that these men of Galilee have had too much new wine – that their language was the language of drunks. This was a sin against the Holy Spirit!

It was infuriating, and yet so understandable!

Remember, those people of Jerusalem longed for renewal just as much as anyone. They, too, sought encouragement in their times of desperation. Desperation due to sin is an inseparable part of life for any of us. Then in Jerusalem, and today for us here, what is still for many the greatest relief from desperation? The answer now and then, and until the end of time, is "wine and liquor!" Wine has the power to relieve and help us forget. Certainly the Lord God also created the vine. And the intent as well as the result of wine is indeed to renew the strength of the depressed and motivate those who are dejected. So why should we be surprised if the crowds in Jerusalem, who never knew any other cause for excessive exuberance except from the use of wine, could find no other reason for the excitement of the apostles, and thus accused them of "being full of new wine"? Yet such accusations reveal the depth of our sinfulness and depravity. When we are left to our own devices, without light from above, we only recognize the work of the *Spirit of Grace*, as the work of the *spirit of Satan*! Only God's grace and loving-kindness protects us from this error.

And that is what happened here. For wine gives strength, and wine is a source of God-given encouragement. (Proverbs 31:6) ("Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish"). It can prevent the depressed from becoming a prey to despair. But wine has its *limitations*, and can also have a devilish power.

If you "need a drink" and limit it to one occasion, taken with proper moderation, you will be encouraged and inspired. But if the "need" is intemperate and too frequent, and becomes a habit, the drink will no longer be a source of strength and encouragement. It will destroy you and unleash a demonic power in your heart, which can only be overcome by incredible human will power.

That's why the strong drinks, which stimulate us, can be a precious blessing, but also a very real danger. It is like fire, which is so helpful when used appropriately. But as soon as it gets out of control, it will burn and scorch and cause painful wounds.

Drunkenness comes from the Devil; it is a satyr from Satan, which sneaks into human hearts and souls.

When people are not moved to sing the praises of the Lord of Heaven, they express the inner poisoning of their souls enslaved by the evil desires of their depraved hearts. And the people in Jerusalem compared the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with such a demonic expression of slavery to sin.

Such is the bitter fruit of human sin.

This meditation by Abraham Kuyper has been translated by Jack Van Meggelen (jack@vanmeggelen). Jack lives in Willowdale, Ontario

Who will go to Bethlehem?

Again the story will be told
that there will be shalom
everywhere over
the whole world.

Right away there is a contradiction
for the war between Israel
and the Arabs does
not lie about it
and what is the meaning of
a song sung by the angels,
in a language
which you sing
more than you
comprehend.

In the plains of Golan
and in the desert
human bodies were loaded,
on a truck,
waiting for a driver
to transport them:
a cartload
for Death.

Blood trickled away
in the sand,
the fields were red
for the harvest.

God of the Fields
of Ephratha,
who will go to
Bethlehem as once
the shepherds did,
kneeling in worship,
recognizing that all has come
and is coming, through Him?

Am I the one
who cannot do it?

By Geert Boogaard: Brood en Wijn,"Wie zal er gaan naar Bethlehem?" translated by Case J. Boot

Columns

My window seat
Mendelt Hoekstra

A consumerist question

Eight years ago we lived in the same town as our church. For five years we lived four towns away from our church and now, because of our last move, we live six towns away. The drive is getting longer and longer. Getting three kids dressed, fed, nourished and ready for church on Sunday morning doesn't usually feel like a day of rest. So since moving, one of the more frequent questions I have been hearing is if we were going to "find another church." I usually sigh, hesitantly admit and say, "Yes, we are."

We've worshipped at five different churches in the last couple months. I've heard the question a number of times, "are you church shopping?" The question, posed like that, usually jolts me.

I play basketball three times a week. So I need a new pair of shoes on a semi-regular basis. I need to take care of my soles. So when I feel the time has come for a new pair of shoes, I go to the store and try and find a pair that fit, that are reasonably priced and that look good (in that order). And I have always been successful. It is easy to do. Go out, find some shoes, buy them and forget about the experience until the new pair becomes old. Then I resume the same ordeal and go shoe shopping again.

But *church shopping?*

I cringe at the term. Church shopping. Shopping for churches. Soul shopping. Frankly, I feel strange going to different churches to "check them out." I'm not looking for another church because I am disillusioned with the church where we are currently members. My church was our family for eight years, through the birth of three children and the death of my wife Marisa. We were deeply connected with that church – they are our family. But now that my children go to a school in a different community than our church, it seems fitting for us to worship in that same community.

I remind myself that I need to find a church where I can help further the kingdom. But what has happened is that I sit and listen to music accompaniment and wonder if I could serve in that way. *Could I go to a church that doesn't have a grand piano?* I look around. I study what programs they have for children. I see if there are some of my children's classmates in the church. *Is there a good Sunday School program for my kids?*

I wonder if I will connect well with the members of the church, and if I could find friends here, or if it looks like we are too different. *Some of the people bring their Tim Hortons coffee to church, is that holy?*

I do not want this process to be a supply and demand transaction where I go to get my "cup of Jesus" on Sunday morning in return for a few dollars or some of my time. The kingdom of God is at every church before I come to it, so I need to be reminded to look for the ways that I can aid the advancement of the gospel. If I actively seek the furthering of the kingdom, if I follow and lead, if I find a gospel-living church, then the upright piano, the Sunday School program, and the Tim Hortons coffee won't matter.

This task of finding our place in a new church needs to be prayerfully done. It's easier to buy shoes. It's easier shopping for my soles than my soul.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in St. Catharines, Ont. with his three children.

Words that make me smile

There are numbers
on the board
and I sit paging
in the hymnal
looking for old words
and new words
that are good enough
to make me smile.

During the singing
I noticed that
I was wrong
when I thought that
for me there was no refuge
I sing along with the people who
have a God who pull you
out of the marshland.
They sing: many a times
you have exempted
my life, Lord,
from death.

Geert Boogaard: "*Niet zonder hoop*," translated by Case J. Boot

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Harvesting rainbows

Rain pelted the window. Gusts of wind whipped leaves across the yard. Jack appeared in the kitchen and stared out at the grim scene – yet another dark and dreary day in a series of many.

He spoke without looking at me. "I woke up this morning with the distinct feeling that we're not going to get the soybean harvest this year."

I wanted to assure him otherwise. But I kept quiet, knowing that his dire prediction might well come true. I handed him a cup of coffee, and we sat down in the living room. We retreated into our morning devotions, taking comfort in familiar Bible verses and praying for respite from the dismal weather.

The soys had been ready for combining since a killer frost three weeks earlier. Then the rain began and had continued ever since, except for the odd dry day in between.

We talked about the upcoming Thanksgiving weekend, family dinner plans, and the fact that in nearly thirty years of cropping, only once had we seen a harvest failure. We lost the corn in 1992 due to mould. That year Jack combined soys in the snow and sowed winter wheat early in November, as opposed to the usual late September/ mid-October planting. It's a scenario we hope never to see repeated.

But this summer in Ontario had been remarkably similar to that one. Cold, wet, dark weather made spring planting difficult. The crops struggled to develop with scarce sunshine over summer. Heavy frosts effectively terminated an already short growing season in September.

The coming week promised only more precipitation and cold temperatures. We were also shipping chickens in a few days and faced a quick turnaround to get ready for the next flock. Clean out, disinfecting and preparation for the new birds would have to be completed within two weeks.

"On the upside," said Jack, "If the rain keeps up at least I can focus on cleaning barns and not worry that I should be in the field."

I gave him a hug and stroked his cheek before he went out the door. "I'm ok," he said, "I just keep reminding myself to stop looking around and keep looking up."

"Looking up is important," I said to myself as I piled the breakfast dishes into the sink.

A few days earlier, desperate for fresh air and exercise I had walked through the rain with Rocky. Well-loved words came to mind: *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.* I had prayed the whole summer for God's blessing on the fields. All I could do now was wait and see what he had in mind. No, that wasn't true. My prayers were to be accompanied by *thanksgiving,* whether we got the harvest or not.

Even as the sun shone on the horizon ahead of me, fat raindrops slapped my jacket. A sudden clap of thunder convinced me to head for home. I tugged Rocky back toward the farm. Enormous black clouds loomed above the barns. The rain stung my face. Rocky flattened his ears and blinked against the wind. I lifted my gaze and then I saw it – the intense double arch of a rainbow shimmering over our farm.

What had God told Noah when he came off the ark? *As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.* Life holds no guarantees of a prosperous harvest, only the promise of God's presence in all circumstances.

Two weeks have passed since then. The soys are in the granary, the winter wheat is in the ground and the barns are clean. God sent a few dry days and a lot of unexpected help. While Jack combined and planted, Willene, James, Stephanie and Grandpa all showed up at various times. They helped with assorted barn tasks as well as running wagons and equipment back and forth. In spite of a miserable head cold, I mastered jobs I'd never done before. We put in long hours. Neither Jack's back nor his machinery gave him too much grief.

I can't remember a more challenging harvest, or one for which we were more grateful. That's consistent with what I've learned – the darker the sky, the more brilliant the rainbow.

This evening I walked with Rocky around the cornfields. The forecast calls for more rain. I wonder if we'll ever get that crop into the bin. God only knows. And that's good enough for me.

Heidi Vander Slikke (vanderslikke@evers.ca) lives in Harriston, Ont.

Society

Christ @ Culture
Lloyd Rang

Skepticism, unbelief and the anti-vaccination movement

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use." – Galileo

When I was in my early 20s, I met an older gentleman – a friend of my sister – who walked with crutches. When I asked what had happened to him, my sister all but whispered the word: *Polio*.

I was born in the late 1960s. By the time I was in elementary school, polio was unheard of. But my older sister knew it could kill, cripple or leave the victim in an iron lung. And for my parents' generation, it was a scourge. When they immigrated in 1953, Canada was experiencing its worst-ever polio epidemic, with 8000 cases and 481 deaths.

Today, the disease affects only about 1600 people worldwide. Along with smallpox – so far the only disease to have been fully eradicated outside the lab – polio represents a triumph of modern medicine over disease.

A century ago, the leading cause of death in Canada was infectious disease. Today it is less than five percent.

This means two things: first, that public immunization programs are effective when it comes to eradicating disease.

Second: that for several generations now Canadians have had very little reason to fear infectious diseases.

Until now, that is.

The arrival of H1N1 in North America has put the spotlight on a growing anti-vaccination movement. Led by celebrities, the movement claims that modern vaccines are responsible for diseases such as autism. The cause, they say, are the adjuvants used in vaccines – agents such as aluminum salts, or oils – that trick the body's immune system into reacting more quickly as well as preservatives such as trace amounts of mercury.

The vaccine approved for use in Canada – Arepanrix by the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline – contains about 5 micrograms of mercury. To put this in perspective: a tuna sandwich contains about 25 micrograms of mercury. Nevertheless, this has some people worried about side effects.

Except study after study has proven there are none. The Centre for Disease Control in the US lists nine recent, exhaustive peer-reviewed studies that show that there is no link whatsoever between autism and vaccines containing trace amounts of mercury.

So why is this even an issue?

If the medical community has declared a vaccine safe (such as the Canadian H1N1 vaccine – which is a close cousin of a vaccine that has been used safely in about 40 million vaccinations in Europe) why is there any debate?

The answer is the power of the individual story.

In other words: "Hey, did you hear about that friend of John's who got autism from a vaccine," is always a more juicy and compelling story than: "Hey, did you hear that based on clinical trials in Belgium, the adjuvant in the Arepanrix vaccine has been deemed safe for use by Health Canada?"

So despite the assurances of government and doctors, and a successful track record for large-scale vaccination programs, some people remain more convinced by the anecdotal evidence against vaccines than by science supporting them.

It's not a political issue. People on the right often oppose vaccinations out of a distrust of government, while those on the left distrust the pharmaceutical industry.

It's also not an issue of healthy skepticism. There is no real, clinical evidence to support the claims of vaccination opponents. The opposition isn't based on reason. It is based on faith or, rather, a lack of faith in government, doctors or industry.

However, it is understandable.

Very few people who lived through the polio epidemics of the 1950s need to be sold on the effectiveness of vaccines.

But my generation – and the ones after it – have never lived through an epidemic. For us, a single story can scare the living daylights out of us, whereas a bunch of statistics from Health Canada can seem unreal. Plus, we're plugged into the web – where, to the untrained eye, Health Canada's site or the CDC's site can seem just as credible as some crackpot's personal web site.

The Bible doesn't have much to say about vaccines, obviously. But the New Testament does make a lot of use of the Greek verb "sophroneo," which means "to be of sober mind, to be reasonable, sensible."

It's the verb used in 1 Peter 4:7 when he wrote: "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit."

When it comes to vaccinations, by all means, be skeptical. But when looking at the risks to your health, or that of your family, be of sound judgment and sober spirit, too. God gave us the ability to use reason *for* a reason – and until now, we've been putting it to pretty good use, medically speaking.

Let's not turn back now.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.

The Public Square
Harry Antonides

A clash of worldviews

It did not take long for U.S. Navy Lt. Carey Cash to run into a storm of protest after being appointed to the chaplaincy at Camp David, the presidential retreat. He had committed the unpardonable sin of pointing out that many followers of Islam have resorted to violence. Cash is quoted to have written:

"Sadly, grace is often absent in Islam, which is based upon binding religious law, requiring strenuous adherence to every tenet of the 'Five Pillars of Allah.' A religion that emerges from the soil of strict adherence to law 'as a means of gaining God's favor will always tend toward extreme self-sacrifice."

This in itself is a fairly mild description, since living sacrificially, that is, unselfishly, is an admirable way of life. The problem here lies in the word "extreme," and it is not much of a stretch to think that Cash had in mind the Islamist terrorists who blow themselves up to kill and destroy in the name of Allah. Think 9/11.

'Dangerous people'

In any case, the critics ferreted out additional incriminating statements by Cash and other Christians who advocated the spread of Christianity in the military. In other words, these Christians are dangerous people who want to advance their own faith while violating the rights of all non-Christians. They must be stopped from ever accomplishing such sinister plans.

Chris Rodda, Senior Research Director of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), posting on huffington.com, wrote that the reaction "around the world" clearly indicates that the international community is focusing on one thing only, namely, this chaplain's "deprecating" statements about Islam.

MRFF president, Mikey Weinstein weighed in: The attention of the world is riveted on Lt. Cash's "unabashed disgust and disdain for ALL of Islam," and President Obama, as the Commander-in-Chief, must publicly denounce these "dangerously outrageous statements," and make it crystal clear that these "blatantly unconstitutional fundamentalist Christian religious "'crusaders'" will not be allowed in the mighty American military. Weinstein demanded that "Lt. Cash should be swiftly removed from his Camp David chaplaincy slot and, just as expeditiously, very publicly punished for his egregious statement, not publicly lionized by our President."

Everyone who has eyes to see and a mind to think is well aware that, though they are a minority of the 1.2 billion Muslims, a substantial number of them has inflicted, and are continuing to do so on a daily basis, unspeakable cruelties on non-Muslims, and even on many fellow Muslims.

The plain fact is that where Islam is the ruling ideology, no other religion is allowed, even to the extent that those who want to leave Islam do so at the risk of their freedom and even their life. One of the ironies is that the free West provides total freedom of religion to everyone, even those who preach hatred and intolerance to others – or serve as apologists for them.

What enemy?

Navy chaplain Lt. Abuhena Saifulislam posted an article praising the tolerance of Islam in the May 7, 2009 issue of the newsletter of the Naval District Washington. He made the following claims:

"The Quran is full of instruction and advice of how to be tolerant of others. Tolerance is one of the basic principles of Islam and a religious moral duty for Muslims .... The Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – spoke about the equality of all human beings, regardless of their race, color, language, or ethnic background. Islam emphasizes the establishment of equality and justice. Both of these values cannot be established without some degree of tolerance. Islam recognized, from the very beginning, the principle of freedom of belief or freedom of religion. It said very clearly that it does not allow coercion in matters of faith and belief. There is no compulsion in religion." (2:256)

"...Islam may tolerate many things, but it teaches zero tolerance for injustice, oppression, and violation of the rights of other human beings.... Islam teaches tolerance on all levels; individual, groups and states. It should be a political and legal requirement. Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism) and the rule of law."

The only words true in this claim are "from the very beginning." Indeed, Muhammad initially had to rely on persuasion and tolerance. But that changed radically when he achieved a position of supremacy after his move to Medina (622). Then the Koran changed (by abrogation), and Muhammad's own words and example began to direct the faithful to fight and conquer the Infidels.

The earlier appreciative description of the "People of the Book" changed into instructions to subjugate and kill. Christians became blasphemers destined for hell, and Jews were compared to pigs and apes. Muhammad announced that he had been given the sword to ensure "that no one but Allah is worshiped."

Many Muslims believe in the tolerant sections of the Koran. But those who have declared war on the free West – and especially on Israel because it is occupying "holy ground" – can find all the inspiration they need in the Islamic scriptures to justify terrorizing and killing millions of innocent people.

Because this ugly truth is ignored and denied, a Christian chaplain in the U.S. navy is vilified for speaking the truth, whereas a Muslim chaplain is free to proclaim blatant lies – thereby adding to the confusion and division that threatens to tear America apart. A topsy-turvy world, if you ask me.

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) is a retired director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada

Society / Review

From Toddlers to Teens
by Denise Dykstra

Marriage is not a diamond

Our two youngest children love to play house. They have their roles perfected. Tia is the wife. She carries a baby around, packs lunches for school, and takes a break every once in a while to read a chapter in a book. Damien is the husband. He goes to work on his motorbike, calls Tia "hon," and brings the kids to the park whenever the weather is nice.

In character, Tia and Damien look remarkably similar to Ray and myself. And why not? Their whole understanding of marriage comes from us.

Children learn about marriage from their parents, directly and indirectly. This can be a scary thought – as sinful people we're far from ideal examples to follow – but it's one we should take special note of. When we're aware we're passing information and skills onto others, we generally work harder to be better role models.

Positive example

One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is a happy marriage. The marital relationship sets the emotional tone of a home. If the relationship between husband and wife is strong, it creates a haven of refuge from which kids can flourish. If the relationship is filled with conflict and tension, it creates an unstable environment that's stressful for kids. Children do best when their surroundings are peaceful and secure. The foundation of such an atmosphere is a father and mother who love each other.

In addition to playing a part in how happy and secure children are, the marital relationship serves as a blueprint for kids for their own marriage. From their parents, children learn how to interact and handle situations with their future spouse. They see how to resolve differences, how to make decisions. They draw conclusions about the way married people treat each other, for better or for worse.

Parents who maintain a strong and vibrant marriage set a positive example of working through the inevitable ups and downs of married life. They educate their children on the characteristics and skills that build solid relationships. They show their kids how to master one of the most significant qualities of a sound marriage: communication.

The ability to talk to each other and have the other person really listen is very important in creating harmony in a relationship. As is spending time together. Marriage was designed for companionship and intimacy. The first wedding occurred after God created Adam when he decided, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)

The triangle

God created marriage with the intent that it be the first and primary union in our life. He meant for the marital relationship to be more important than the relationship we have with our parents, our friends, and even our children. Sometimes husbands and wives give plenty of attention to their kids and not enough to each other. Over time, that shift in focus can start to hurt even the most solid of relationships.

Parents shouldn't worry about neglecting their kids when they're focused on each other because their kids will reap the benefits. They'll end up with a happier mom and dad, a more secure home life, and the valuable knowledge that at the center of many successful families is a successful partnership.

My husband, Ray, likes to describe our marriage as a triangle. The top point represents God; the bottom two points represent him and me. When something in our life gets in the way of us spending time together – our kids, our friends, work – he says, "We're becoming a diamond." He means that something is intruding in our marriage, becoming a fourth point in the triangle, and we need to remember that our relationship comes first.

I love Ray's analogy of the triangle because it shows how committed he is to our marriage. He puts our relationship before all others. He doesn't do this because he feels our kids aren't important, he does it because he realizes why God gave us marriage: to reflect God and his commitment to us.

Children who grow up with parents who stick together through the good and the bad, get a glimpse of the faithful love of God. Keep this in mind while you and your spouse weather the storms of married life. This is a gift you can give to your kids that's far greater than anything you'll be buying them for Christmas.

Denise Dykstra lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five. Her e-mail address is: dykstras@telus.net

Former *CC* writer 'blooms' with new book

***Blooming – This Pilgrim's Progress*, Marian den Boer**
Review by Heidi VanderSlikke

Long time *Christian Courier* readers will remember Marian den Boer's column, *Slice of Bread*, from the days when Bert Witvoet was *CC* editor the first time around. In her energetic, good-natured style, Marian wrote then about the joys and challenges of her life as a Christian wife and mother in Hamilton, Ontario. The fact that I still remember some of her columns a decade later attests to the sincerity and broad appeal of her writing.

Her book *Blooming – This Pilgrim's Progress* uses some of those earlier columns to provide a more intimate look into the heart of this gregarious pilgrim. But it's more than a collection of her previous work. With the enhanced vision of hindsight and a deep desire for truthful self-examination, Marian tells us familiar stories with new insights, adding further adventures as well.

She punctuates each vignette with reflections on her personal responsibilities, motives, mistakes and flaws, sometimes with brutal honesty. She includes appropriate Scripture verses and contemplates her relationship with God, candidly speculating on what lessons the Holy Spirit might have in mind for her through each of these episodes of daily life.

Crucial event

She groups the stories within two sections – *Old Testimony* and *New Testimony*.

Marian, you see, has had a profound spiritual experience – a watershed event which launched her headlong into a quest to live the Christian faith wholeheartedly. She poignantly captures the essence of her struggles with self-righteousness, pride and independence in a piece titled *Psalm 51 As it Happened to Me*. From that point forward Marian determined to live with a finger constantly on her spiritual pulse.

As is often the case, her personal strengths are also her weaknesses. The key for the child of God is to make every thought captive for Christ. In this process Marian's quirks and shortcomings are easy to relate to. We've all been there, if we dare admit it to ourselves.

Her headstrong attitude and fearless personality often lead to escapades that make a reader laugh out loud. Picture this slender homemaker suddenly face to face with a kitchen full of huge firefighters, all because she got a little overzealous about the possibility of carbon monoxide in the house. Or there was the time when she turned a telemarketer's call into an opportunity for evangelism. Any parent of teenagers will smile knowingly at Marian's anecdotes about teaching her daughter to drive, all the while developing a retroactive empathy for her own driving instructor.

More wisdom to gain

Her stories run the spectrum from hilarious to heart-wrenching. For the sake of consistency, all are treated with brevity. Perhaps in the future Marian will revisit some of the deeper issues she raises incidentally. No doubt she has wisdom to share on such matters as dealing with a teenager's depression, a death in the family, or the trauma of nearly losing a child to drowning in the backyard pool. And I wouldn't be surprised if she someday writes a more contemplative book about the impact of a charismatic encounter on the life of a born and bred Calvinist.

For now, Marian's spunky anthology is engaging, amusing and thought provoking. It's the kind of book you can pick up while waiting for the potatoes to boil, but you probably won't want to put it down when it's time to eat supper. The lilies on the cover aptly remind us of God's ability to work the mundane into something marvelous, and how, in spite of our best efforts, it's only by his Holy Spirit that we can truly experience the joy of blooming.

Blooming – This Pilgrim's Progress, by Marian den Boer, Winnipeg: Word Alive Press, 2009. ISBN: 10-1-897373-65-1. $19.99 Cdn.

Available at:
www.wordalivepress.ca;
Word Alive Press, 131 Cordite Rd., Winnipeg MB R3W 1S1
Redeemer Bookstore;
www.amazon.com
or marian@daviddenboer.ca

Classifieds

Birthday

A blessed birthday to our beloved mother

Gre Lof

celebrating her **90th Birthday** on Nov. 14.

From her children, Elizabeth (Lof) Nienhuis & husband Henk Nienhuis, Rennie (Lof) Korf & husband Jim Korf, predeceased son Dick Lof & surviving wife Linda, Gerald Lof & wife Harma (Drent) Lof, Robert Lof & wife Zee, Fred Lof & wife Nelly (Vander Perk) Lof. Also 17 grandchildren & 21 great-grandchildren. Also predeceased by much loved husband Cornelius Lof.

Best Wishes for a great day and may our LORD always be there for you.

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Anniversaries

Acton 1959 - November 20 - 2009 Acton

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JOHN AND ALI LOOYENGA (van Arragon)

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Rick & Bonnie
Harry & Kim
Sid & Hilda
Rosemary
Gerald & Tracy
8 Grandchildren and 2 Great-grandsons

Come and celebrate with us on Saturday, November 21st, DV at the Acton Bethel Christian Reformed Church. There will be an **Open House** from 1 - 4 p.m. in the fellowship hall. *Best wishes only.*

Home address: 13361 4th Line RR 4
Acton ON L7J 2M1
Email: alilva@sympatico.ca

Anniversaries

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

Saturday, November 14, 2009

is a very important milestone in the lives of

Sake and Tjaltje Dykstra

It is our 55th Wedding Anniversary and the 80th Birthday of Sake. We would be honoured to have you join us in celebrating this special occasion. Please consider this your invitation to an Open House held at

Beaver Valley Community Centre,
81 Victoria St.. S.., Thornbury, ON
from 2-4 p.m.

Your presence indeed would be your present to us.

Home Address: Box 7 RR#2 Clarksburg, ON N0H 1J0

Obituaries

TONY (Teunis) SPALING

of Drayton passed away peacefully at home in the Royal Terrace Nursing Home, Palmerston on Sunday, October 18, 2009 in his 84th year.

Beloved husband of Alice (Lubbers) for 56 years

Dear father and grandfather of
Harry and Trudy Spaling of *Edmonton*
Melisa Spaling and Nick Buesink
Michael and Vanessa Spaling,
Maria Spaling and her friend Brad Hayes;
Al and Frances Spaling of *Wingham*
Ryan Spaling and his friend Destiny Weening
Sonya and Devon Dykstra,
Julia and Jordan Higgins, Candace Spaling;
Charles and Lorrie Spaling of *Drayton*
Nicole Spaling and Steve Zmudczynski
Nathan Spaling, Nicholas Spaling,
Natasha Spaling;
Andy Spaling of *Hamilton*;
Ray Spaling of *New Dundee* & the late Audrey (2007)
Jonathan Spaling, Alicia Spaling.

Brother of Grietje and the late Harm Van Wyk and Dinie and Wietse Vugteveen all of *the Netherlands*.

Brother-in-law of Grietje Lubberts of Waterloo, Janny Lubbers, Minie and the late Hendrik Lubbers all of *the Netherlands*

The family received friends on Wednesday October 21, 2009 at the Drayton Christian Reformed Church where Rev John Vanderburg and Rev Albert Dreise conducted the Funeral Service on Thursday October 22, 2009 followed by interment in Drayton Cemetery. The Pallbearers were Michael Spaling, Ryan Spaling, Nathan Spaling, Nicholas Spaling, Jonathan Spaling and Devon Dykstra.

As expressions of sympathy donations to the Wellington Lung Association would be appreciated by the family. Arrangements entrusted to Heritage Funeral Home, Drayton 519-638-3072.

JESSIE (Tjitsche) WIKKERINK

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our dear mother and grandmother on Sunday, October 25th, at Grace Manor in Holland Christian Homes, Brampton surrounded by her family.

Cherished mother of Martin (Wendy), Irene (Kim), Paul (Peng), Rene (Priscilla) and Andre.
Loving grandmother of Michelle, Meaghan, Rebecca, Stephen, Kristina, Nicole, Paul, Corwin and Thomas.
Mom was predeceased by her husband Henk (Jan 2007) and daughter Marcella (March 2004).

A memorial service was held at CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church, Brampton on Wednesday, October 28th.

Donations can be made to the Heart and Stroke Foundation in lieu of flowers. Jessie's book of memories may be signed at www.wardfuneralhome.com

HENDRIKA WILLEMINA (Wilma) WIKKERINK nee Bosman

Born on April 26, 1935 and suddenly but peacefully entered into glory on Friday, October 9, 2009.

She was a loving, supportive and organized wife and mother, the mastermind behind church and school activities as well as numerous vacations. She lived a life of quiet and unwavering service, overcoming obstacles such as the trauma of growing up in wartime, a serious illness as a young mother resulting in the loss of a kidney and the debilitating illness that took hold of her husband, Reind. Perhaps the diligence she demonstrated in caring for him best exemplifies her life of service; she was there for him daily, tirelessly feeding, exercising, caressing, sharing, praying, reading scriptures and lobbying for his every need. Her strong faith lives on in the lives of her husband, children and grandchildren.

Beloved wife of Reind Wikkerink.
Loving mother of
Janet & Richard Blyleven of *Fisherville*,
Wes & Cynthia Wikkerink of *Waterloo*,
Yolanda & Barry Ryzebol of *Grand Valley*.
Dear Oma of Nicole and Dave, Kristen, Jared, Brian, Rebekah, Celeste, Alyssa, David, Andrew and Michael.
Correspondence address: Y. Ryzebol
202312 County Rd 109 RR4
Grand Valley ON L0N 1G0

He who dwells in the shelter of the most high will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
Psalm 91:1

The LORD called home his child

MITCHELL ALLAN SLOFSTRA

from his home at RR 2, Nanticoke on Saturday, October 3, 2009 after a courageous battle with cancer at the age of 44 years.

He leaves behind his cherished wife Marsha (Lofthouse) Slofstra and his children whom he loved very much – Natthan, Klairissa and Austin.

A loving son of Beverley of Townsend and the late Allan (1996).
Brother of Irene (Paul Veldhuis), *Mount Hope*
Eric (Lisa), *Simcoe*
Sophia (Jeremy Schott), *Selkirk*
Father-in-law Keith Lofthouse and the late June (2009) Brother-in-law Mark (Laura) Lofthouse and many nieces and nephews.

Mitchell was the lay minister at Cheapside Brethren in Christ Church and during his illness continued to minister and encourage anyone with whom he came in contact.

There was a celebration of Mitchell's life at Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church in Jarvis on Tuesday, October 6, 2009.

Friends are invited to send condolences to the family at www.cooperfuneralhome.ca

Personals

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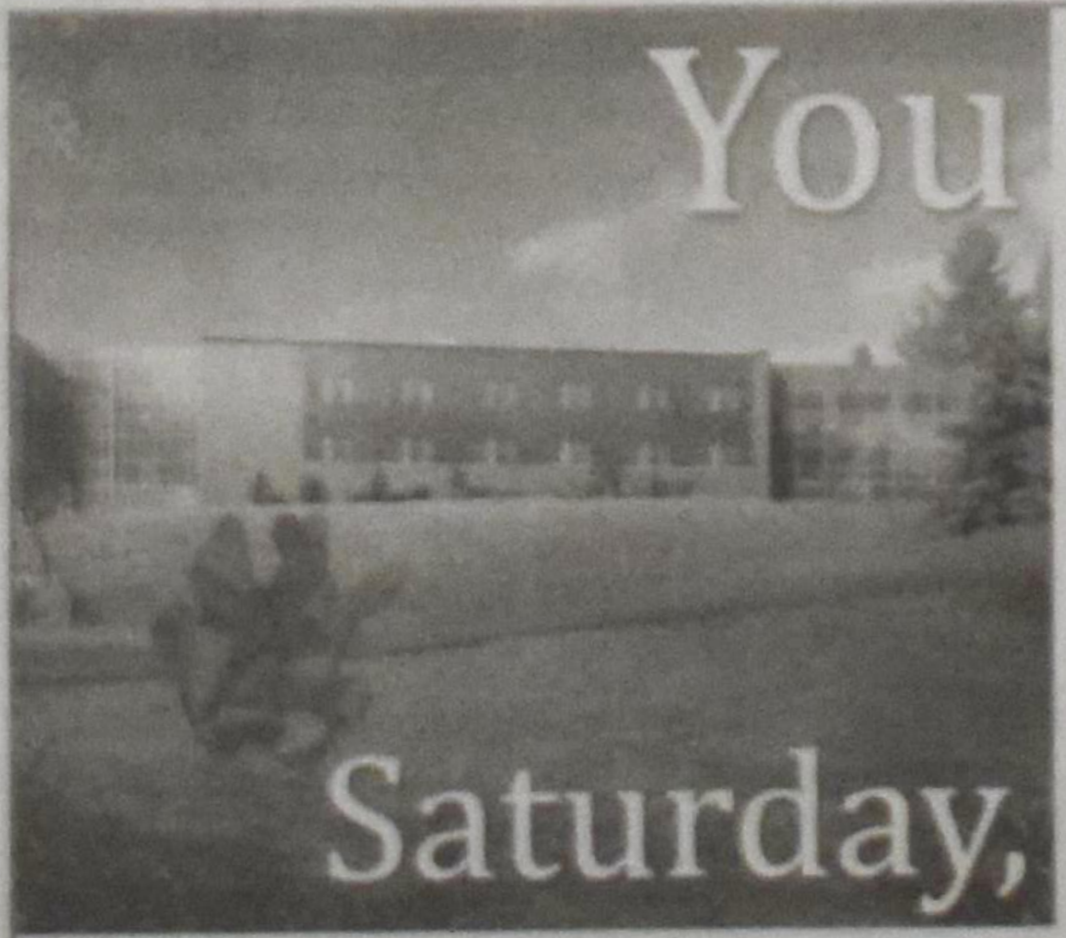

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Associate Director-Human Resources
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rklassen@mutualsupport.net

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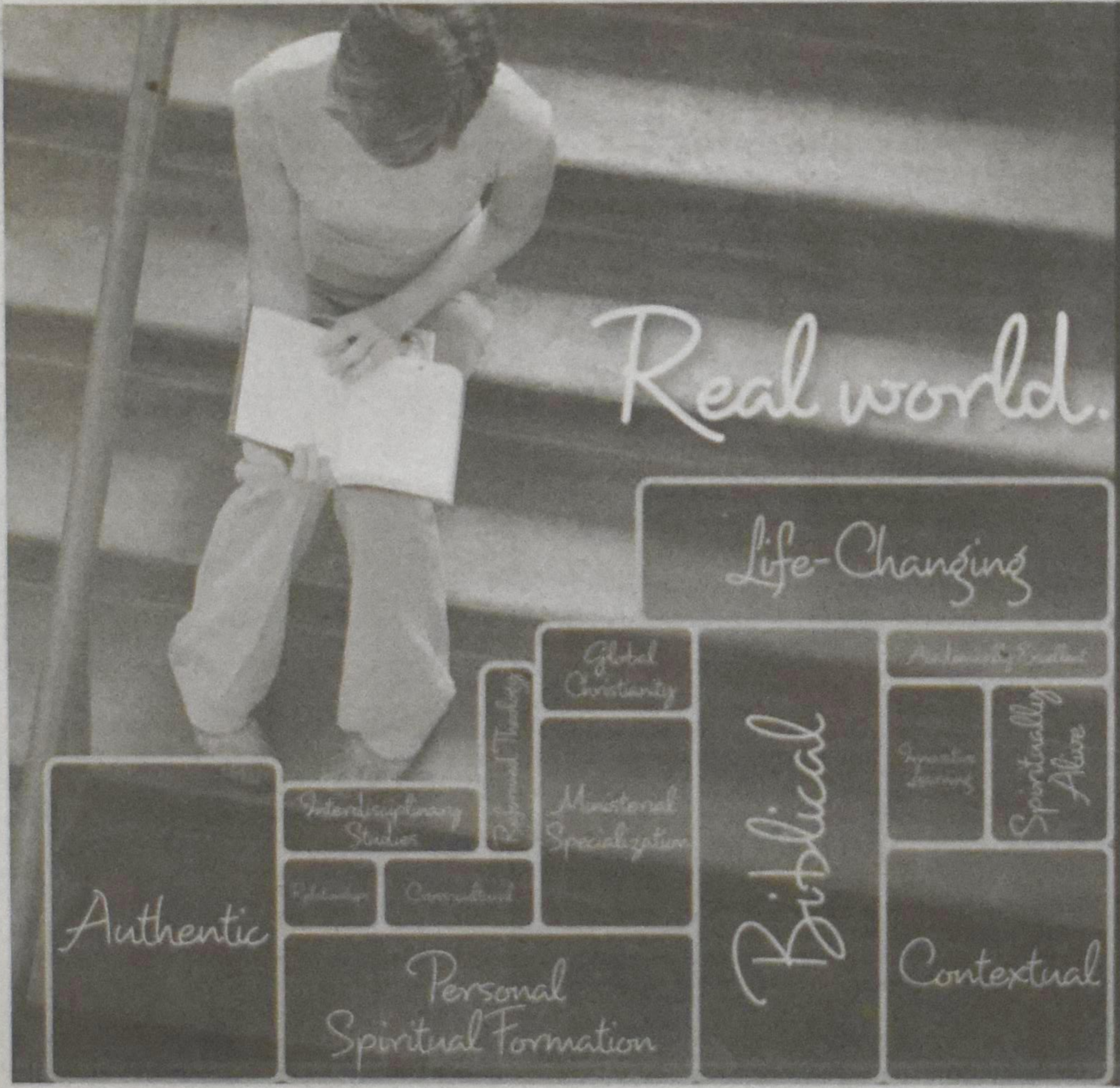

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Classifieds

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 20 Christian Festival Concert at 7:30 p.m. at the Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto. Call 416-636-9779 or email landmkooy@rogers.com See Ad.

Nov. 21, 22 Immanuel CRC, **Hamilton**, ON, 50th anniversary. See ad p.22

Nov 27 The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) invites you to the retirement dinner and celebration for Dr. Adriaan Guldemond at Kings Christian Collegiate, Oakville, ON. RSVP by Nov.13. Contact Samantha at 905-648-2100 or samanthab@oacs.org.

Nov. 29 Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m.

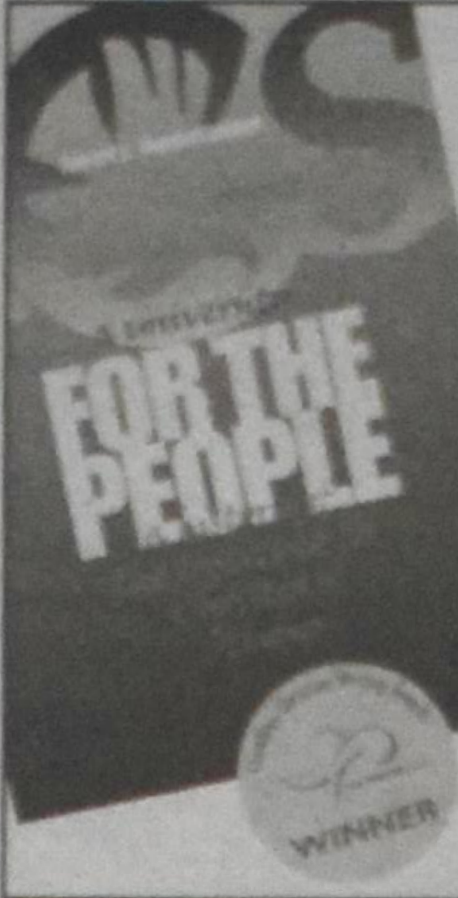
Dec. 4 Maranatha CRC, York, 'Ancient Promise, Holy Child', an evening of seasonal and sacred music featuring pianist Monica Heeg-Admiral, vocalists Aileen Dekkers & Tjits Van Reenen, guitarist Rich Freeman, and other musical guests. Time: 8 p.m. Admission: $10, all proceeds to the Caledonia & District Food Bank.

Dec 6 Nederlandse Kerst Zang Dienst, Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St., **Woodstock**, ON at 7:00 p.m. with Rev. Henry DeBolster. Fellowship and Refreshments following the service

Dec 16 Concert IN PRAISE OF GOD'S SON with the Ambassadors Christian Male chorus, the Women's Advent Singers and Rev. Stephen Terpstra as organist at Mt. **Hamilton** CRC, 7:30 p.m.

Dec 18 Concert IN PRAISE OF GOD'S SON, 7:30 p.m. in Ebenezer CRC in **Jarvis**, Ont

2010 - **June 26, 27** Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact us at www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.



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FRIENDS *of the Fest*

Benefit Concert
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Location:
Global Kingdom Ministries
1250 Markham Rd.
Scarborough, ON

Doors open at 6:pm for Artist's booths; meet & greet time.
Contact Info:
sharon@missionfest.org

The 'Friends of the Fest' benefit concert will feature **guest artists** Kelita, Rhema Worship & Praise Choir, Terry Posthumus, and Nathanael Gerber & Co.

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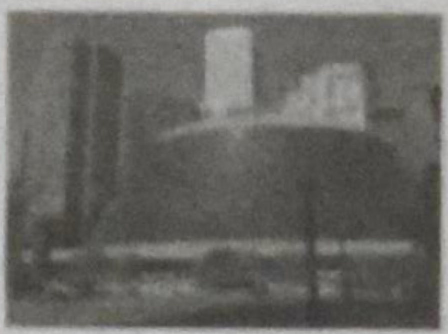
Christian Festival Concert



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Operation We Are Here:
CRC Army Chaplain's wife reaches out

Chris Meehan

Benita Koeman, the wife of a Christian Reformed Church Army chaplain, is busy building a web site called Operation We are Here, and creating other social media outlets to help military families handle the stress of war. Her husband, Scott, is currently stationed in Afghanistan.

Koeman is doing this, she says, as a way to offer practical suggestions to churches, communities and individuals on how to support and encourage the military on the home front. Too often, she says, the tensions and trials of families struggling back home are passed by.

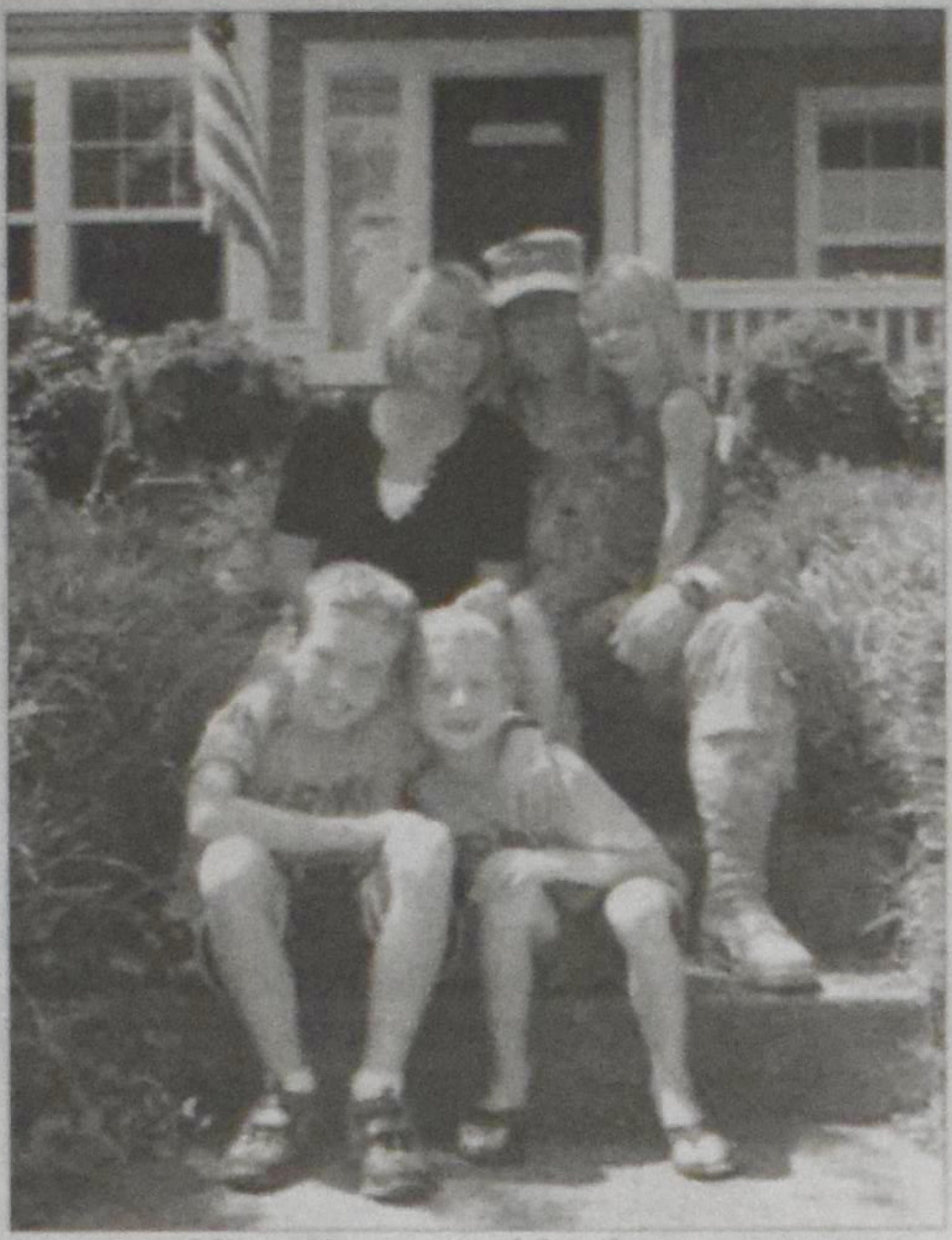
"One out of five military marriages falls apart within two years when one spouse has been deployed, and this rate is escalating at an alarming rate. Since Afghanistan, thousands of marriages in the US Army alone have ended in divorce," she says.

"The challenges faced by military couples truly can be devastating to their marriages, children, and families," writes Benita Koeman. She and her husband, Scott, have three children.

Meanwhile, Lt. Mark Van Eerden, a CRC solider serving in the Army in Afghanistan, agrees that the stress and strain on soldiers and their families is immense.

Although he isn't yet a full-fledged chaplain, Van Eerden was studying to be a chaplain when he was called up from the Army reserve to active duty and sent overseas. He combines his normal Army duties with holding a Bible study in the war zone. He also talks to soldiers about the pressure they are under because of situations beyond their control back home.

"Unfortunately the common problems that arise are family sickness, such as cancer, financial problems, deaths of grandparents, multiple suicides, family alcoholism, and depression," he says.



Benita and Scott Koeman and family.

Van Eerden asks people to pray for his safety and the safety of the troops to whom he tries to minister.

"Things continue to go well for my soldiers and I here in Afghanistan … Our platoon Bible study has steadily grown and is multi-denominational. We have Catholic soldiers, Lutheran soldiers, CRC soldiers and some soldiers who just want to sit in and listen," he writes.

They aren't able to hold the Bible study as often as he would like, but they keep at it, holding it whenever they can. "So far we've read Ephesians and we are now working on 1 Corinthians," writes Van Eerden.

Van Eerden says his unit has lost soldiers due to injuries received in combat. "All of the soldiers are recovering well but the impact on the morale of the soldiers left behind was very noticeable," he says. "I would like to thank everyone for their continued support and prayers. The Bible Study has become a very good way to bring many of our soldiers together to deal with the struggles of warfare."

His group is preparing to return home. "It has been a long hard road with lots of difficulties but it has been a trip that I would not exchange for anything. We are expected to return to our homes around the end of November," he writes.

Benita Koeman, Scott's wife, also asks for prayers to support herself and her husband "as we fulfill our calling in ministry to the soldiers and their families. Pray for the continued development and outreach of Operation We Are Here, the website for military families."

Operation We Are Here takes its name from the popular Dr. Seuss book, *Horton Hears a Who.* When Horton the elephant hears something coming from a small speck of dust, his friends think he's crazy. To save the dust-speck and its inhabitants, Horton tells everyone in Who-ville to holler, scream and shout: "We are here! We are here!" The founders of Operation We Are Here equate the military with the citizens of Who-ville: another world that civilians hardly know exist or care about. Their desire is to "create a link between the civilian world and Who-ville. We in Who-ville need your support and encouragement. *We are here! We are here!"*

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Odds and Trends

Taking the plunge

President Mohammed Nasheed of the Maldives called a cabinet meeting ... on the sea floor. If melting polar ice caps cause sea levels around the world to rise, this low-lying country – a collection of 2,000 islands – may be submerged within 100 years. That fear prompted Nasheed and 13 of his government officials to put on scuba gear and use hand signals for the Oct. 17 meeting, 20 feet below the water's surface.

They signed a document calling on all countries to reduce CO_2 emissions; earlier this year, Nasheed announced his plans to make the Maldives carbon-neutral within a decade. Nasheed has emerged as a "key and colourful voice on climate change," as this stunt demonstrates.

"We have to get the message across by being more imaginative, more creative," he said, just before diving. One thing is certain: he's a figure to keep your eye on at the UN Climate Change conference coming up in Copenhagen next month.

Milk of human kindness

A British study has just proven (as all the best studies do) what regular people have known for a long time: animals respond positively to human kindness. More specifically, dairy cows will increase milk production after hearing their farmer's voice. The controlled study found that when farmers called their cows by name, there was a 28 percent increase in milk yield. Even smaller steps, such as having a radio playing, seem to calm the cows enough to improve production. The study also noted that human voices during milking decreased the amount of bovine kicking. In a CBC interview, the researchers offered one caution: never call your cow after your mother-in-law or wife. That may result in a response you don't want to see.

Scarecrows and skulls

In the last twenty years, Halloween has become the second-most-decorated holiday. You can hardly walk down one block without seeing some seasonal reference on display, from pre-fab scarecrows to synthetic gore. In the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Tom Purcell writes that "Halloween spending has risen to nearly $5 billion annually – not bad for a non-gift-giving, non-government-sanctioned holiday."

The Christian response to Halloween varies dramatically, as a recent *Faith Today* article summarizes: 1) Ignore it, perhaps by dressing up as Luther and celebrating Reformation Day instead; 2) Transform it, by having a "non-costumed event that happens to coincide with Halloween," as outreach; 3) Engage it, by having fun, connecting with your neighbours, and talking first with your kids about the dark side of the holiday.

Purcell's comments, however, make me wonder if there's an unexplored dark side to October 31. Somehow, $5 billion for Halloween must be stoking the embers of our need to shop just in time for Christmas, that most-decorated-holiday.

Angela Reitsma Bick